

PZ 3

.D162

C

COPY 1

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Chap. 35 Copyright No. _____

Shelf _____

PZ3

.D162C

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

PRICE, TEN CENTS.

No. 6.

The Idle Hour Series.

Published Semi-Weekly.

By Subscription, per Year, Ten Dollars.

March 12, 1892.

Entered at the New York Post-Office as second-class matter.



The Cuban Heiress

BY

MARY KYLE DALLAS.

NEW YORK:
THE F. M. LUPTON PUBLISHING COMPANY,
No. 65 DUANE STREET.

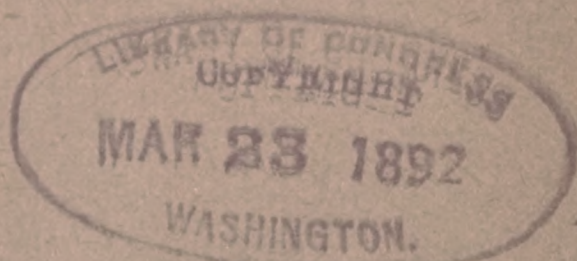
THE CUBAN HEIRESS.

A NOVEL.

✓
BY MARY KYLE DALLAS,

Author of "Grace Garrick," "Winifred," "The Grinder
Papers," Etc.

40
de la
series.



5517 X¹

NEW YORK:

THE F. M. LUPTON PUBLISHING COMPANY,

No. 65 DUANE STREET.

PZ3
D162C

COPYRIGHT, 1892, BY
THE F. M. LUPTON PUBLISHING COMPANY.

THE CUBAN HEIRESS.

THE WOMAN BY THE WATER-SIDE.

It was a chill December night, past twelve, for the church clock, high up in the tapering steeple, now veiled by cloud and mist from human sight, had just dropped down into the darkness a dozen such hoarse, discordant strokes, that a listener might have imagined that it had taken cold, and was complaining of the damp and darkness.

Along the scattered village streets but few lights gleamed, and those few, shining from upper chamber windows, told of watchers by sick beds, or of mothers waking with unquiet children, and in one case, where a long, black streamer floated from the door, of that last sad vigil love keeps above the casket whence its jewel has fled.

For social gathering or public entertainment not one lamp burnt, for Carltonville was a quiet, old-fashioned place, with few charms for gay people; and even the quaint, red-roofed tavern, by name "The Golden Dove," was closed at nine; so that not a matron in the village knew the joy of sitting up until the wee sma' hours, listening at the key-hole, flattening her Grecian nose against the window-pane, and finally falling into a doze, to start awake in paroxysms of terror, and declare, with clasped hands and tearful eyes, that at last, at last, at last, Mr. Smith had been garroted!

In all Carltonville there seemed to be but one person abroad—a stout man, in a many-caped overcoat, who, with a lantern in his hand, patrolled the streets, uttering as he passed, a long-drawn, dismal cry:

"Past twe-e-lve o'clock. Pa-a-st twe-e-elve o'-o'-o'clock."

"It's a miserable night," muttered this man to himself,

as he changed his lantern to the other hand, and shivered under the touch of a blast of wind, which seemed keener than its predecessors, "a miserable night. It does seem hard that every living soul but me should be snug a-bed. And what's the use of this, I wonder? Housebreakers know which side their bread is buttered too well to choose such a night, and nobody is out to be murdered but me. Darned if I'll not get out of this cold somehow if I lose my place for it."

Casting his eyes around, they lighted upon the projecting porch of a church, and toward this he turned his steps, and in a few moments was safely ensconced under the shelter. The upper step or sill formed a comfortable seat, and by comparison the place was warm. The watchman plunged his hands deep into his pockets, tucked his feet under him, and nodding complacently, said :

"This is better, I reckon."

Better it decidedly was, and in a few moments the watchman's eyes closed, his head dropped upon his shoulders, and he was sound asleep and snoring.

His slumbers were deep at first, and for two hours his shrill cry failed to follow the chime of the church clock.

Many a sleeper, pillowed upon down, rested less quietly than the old watchman on the hard church porch. At last, however, odd dreams began to trouble his repose. He fancied himself in the kitchen of "The Golden Dove," where the maid, Polly, in a terrible temper, was hard at work at the churn—plash, plash, plash! The butter wouldn't come—Polly said it was bewitched, and churned faster than ever. All in vain, as it seemed; and, at last, in desperation, the churning lifted the churn in both hands, and dashed the contents out upon the floor, drenching him from head to foot!

The douche ended his dream, and the watchman started to his feet broad awake. Wet he was, indeed, for the wind had changed, and a torrent of sleet was driving into the church porch, but it was strange that he could hear the plash, plash of the churn-dasher yet. It was no delusion; something not far off really made the sound; and an instant's reflection told him that something must be tread of feet upon the sodden snow.

Who was abroad that bitter night?

Peering through the darkness, the watchman could just discern a slender figure, toiling painfully against the wind and sleet, with some light burden in its arms—a female figure, willowy and frail, hooded and shawled closely.

The watchman's blood ran cold. There was a tradition in Carltonville of a certain ghostly lady, who having loved well if not wisely, and having been deceived and hardly used on earth, chose to return thereunto now that she was dead, instead of lying comfortably in the churchyard, and was at odd times to be met, with a baby she had murdered and buried, folded to her breast. Rumor also said that, at such times, she rapped three on the tombstone of her deceiver, who lay beneath a lofty slab, which gave him credit for all the cardinal virtues, and that at the summons, he, despite the splendid obsequies which had taken place in his honor, was obliged to arise, however cold the night, and walk with her until cock-crow.

The watchman knew this story by heart, and he shivered as he gazed upon the advancing form.

“It's no ghost,” he said in a moment, plucking up courage. “Ghosts never make no noise. This is a living woman, though what she wants out to-night, and seemingly with a child along with her, is more than I can tell. Anyhow I ain't afraid of her—why should I be?”

Rising to his feet, the watchman left his shelter, less loth to do so that it had become no shelter at all in the rapid changing of the wind, and holding his lantern low to mark the path, followed the willowy figure as it toiled on through the dark, stormy night. Along the scattered row of pretty cottages, known as Main street, the splashing feet went, never hesitating, but seeming to have some fixed destination, and at last upon the broad corner, formed by Squire Shelbourne's mansion and great garden, turned eastward into what would some day be known as Water street. As yet it was merely an imaginary street—the sign-board at the corner representing what would be, not what was. A green lane, running riverward with two shanties—the schoolhouse, and a little edifice owned by a man who loaned boats to those who wished them, or, for a consideration, rowed parties up and down, or across the river,

being the sum total of the buildings of which it boasted in those days. Down Water street—then faster than before went the small, plashing feet, and the heart of the old watchman throbbed faster, as he noted the fact that they were going riverward.

“God forgive us all!” he muttered. “This is a wicked world and an awful world to live in. What call can a woman have to go to the river-side to-night?”

The awful truth that she was going there to drown herself was in his mind, but he was too terribly afraid to give it utterance, even in a whisper, and to himself. Still he clasped stave and lantern together in his left hand, keeping the right free to use quickly if needs be, and hastened his footsteps to be closer to the now almost flying figure.

It was high time, for the woman’s feet had touched the little wharf where Aaron Hacher’s boats were tied, and she stood there in a moment, motionless and upright as a statue.

There was no doubt of her dreadful purpose now—you might read it in the very turn of her hooded head riverward.

The watchman grew pale and cold, and shuddered from head to foot, and one old hand in its great worsted mitten was outstretched, almost touching her, but not quite.

The woman did not and had not heard him. She thought herself alone, and began to mutter in a strange, wild voice:

“I can’t see them, but I know they are there—fiends, with their long talons, stretched to clasp me when I come amongst them! They are beckoning me now! They are glad to have me! Glad! glad! glad! Will he weep, I wonder? He used to love me once. Ha! ha! ha! It was an odd love—wasn’t it, baby?”

She took a step nearer to the water’s edge,—and so did the watchman, and the great hand hovered over her like the wing of some dark bird. The burden she held was lifted close to her lips now, and she was kissing it.

“Oh, baby, baby!” she muttered. “There are mothers in all those houses who don’t love their children as I love you—I, your bad, mad mother! Oh, baby, baby! and you’ll never love me, for I can’t meet you in Heaven, I’m afraid! Oh, don’t cry, baby, don’t cry.”

For the piteous wail of a young infant had arisen upon the night air, and she was trying to smother the sound in her bosom under the rough shawl she wore.

"Hush, my love. They'd bring us back to this wicked world if they heard you! They don't want us to go free. But this is no place for us now he hates us. Is it, my dove? Oh, no, no, no!"

Then, as though her mind had changed, the poor creature sank down upon her knees on the dock, and began to pray—an incoherent prayer for pardon, for mercy, for pity.

In its midst she started to her feet.

"I cannot pray!" she cried; "God does not hear me, and angels have deserted me!" and in another moment she stood on the very verge of the old wharf, ready for the fatal leap. But just then the hovering hand descended, clasping her frail arm in a vise-like grip, and a voice cried into her ears:

"Do you expect God to listen to a murderess? You woman, whoever you are, it's plain you've lost your senses."

Powerless to shake off the grasp of the old man's hand, the woman turned and looked at him. He could see the glitter of a pair of large black eyes, that was all. Her other features were quite hidden from his view by the great hood she wore. Thus for a moment they stood, both quite, quiet. The watchman would have given much to know whose arm it was he held crushed in his great hand.

"I don't know who you may be," he said, "but I do know that you are a woman. More than that, I know you've got a soul, and if I have the power, I'll neither see a woman drowned, or a soul lost. You'd go straight to the place all Christians pray the Lord to keep 'em from! Don't you know that, young woman?"

"No place is worse than this," said the woman; "it could not be. I want to sleep; I want to rest; let me go."

"I won't! I'd as leave stick a knife into you as do that," said the watchman. "You're crazy now. I'm old, but strong enough to hold a wee bit of a thing like you. Why, what are you thinking of to want to drown that baby, if

you don't care for yourself? I tell you what, young woman, I'm going to take you to your friends, and see you safe before I leave you; and mebbe you'll thank old Davy Drew for it in the other world, as well as here. Come, who do you belong to?"

"I have no friends," she answered, "no friends; do you hear that? What difference does it make what becomes of me? Let me alone. If I don't do it now, I will some time; you can't help that!"

The watchman only held her tighter.

"Suicidal folks is allers crazy; that's my opinion of 'em," he said. "Tie 'em up until they get their senses back, and I bet you they'll never try it again. What I've made up my mind to do is this: take you up to the squire's, and see what he can make of you. He's justice of the peace, and he'll put a stop to this drowning business, short meter; come, now!"

He tried to move on and to draw her with him, but she seemed possessed of almost superhuman strength, and resisted wildly.

"Before you take me anywhere, I'll kill you!" she said. "I'm only a weak girl, but I think fiends help me when I think of that. I'll bury my teeth in your throat, and tear your life out as a wild beast might, before you shall take me where any one can see me!"

The old man glanced at the deserted boat-house and along the lonely road. Truth to tell, he feared the woman at his side, in this paroxysm of rage, and his voice lowered itself to a soothing tone.

"Come, come," he said, "I'll take you wherever you will go. All I want is to keep you from that dreadful sin. Come away from the river."

"I'll go with you," she said. Her manner suddenly subdued and altered. "You know some quiet place where I can sleep to-night? I have money."

"Yes," said the watchman; "I'll see to that. You are coming to yourself, young woman."

He held her arm still, but less tightly, and they turned away from the riverside and went up the lane together. At last they were fairly in Main street, dark and still, save for the driving of the storm.

"Todget's tavern is open," said the watchman; "at least somebody is ready to answer at any hour of the night. I'll take you there, and tell 'em you're a young woman come by the stage, too late to find her friends. Will that suit you?"

"Yes," said the woman dreamily; "anything. You hurt my arm."

"Well, I'll let go of it, then," said the man; "I ain't afraid of losing you now."

Then they plodded on together for some moments. At last she said:

"I am so tired. You've been very good to me, so far; will you take my baby and carry it a little way?"

"Surely," said the watchman; "you're but a small, delicate critter to be out on such a night as this. Give me the baby."

Before the trembling creature by his side obeyed him, however, she pressed a dozen warm kisses on the face of the child, and burst into tears.

"Oh, how could I? How could I?" she sobbed. "Oh! cruel, cruel mother, that I am!"

"I should think so," said the watchman. "I suppose yourn is the old story, and it's shame that there should be such a story to be told; but remember there's a God in Heaven yet; and you ain't fit to meet His face in such a hurry. Death ain't lying asleep comfortable in your grave; only your bones is there, and there ain't one of us can tell what there'll be for our souls to do. Suicide won't help you, young woman."

She made no answer, and with her little burden in his arms he plodded on, making sure that the woman followed him—for he had never known one before who would not follow a being who held her baby in her arms, to the world's end. Turning at last, however, to speak to her and say that yonder was the tavern, the watchman found himself alone.

Softly and fleetly the woman had slipped away from his side, and though he fancied that far away he heard the plashing tread of hasty feet on the muddy snow, he could not feel quite certain that it was not imagination.

The woman might be hiding close at hand, or she might

have sought the river again. This seemed probable, and back on his dreary path the watchman hastened. All in vain. The boat-house and the empty wharf, alone met his view; and, truth to tell, his progress, impeded by the added weight of the child, had been but slow, so that if bent upon suicide, the woman would have had ample time to accomplish her object.

“It’s no use,” the watchman said, disconsolately. “What a fool I’ve been, surely! All I can do now is to take the baby to the squire’s, and he’ll send it to the almshouse, I suppose. God help it!”

And toward the squire’s great house the old watchman bent his steps.

CHAPTER II.

WHAT HAPPENED AT THE SQUIRE’S

APPARENTLY Davy Drew knew the way of the squire’s household well, for without hesitation he passed around the front of the dwelling, and whistling to the great watch dog, who came from his kennel at the sound of his footsteps, rapped at a low door which opened into the garden, and was furnished with a heavy knocker in the shape of an iron claw.

Waiting a moment or two, he heard the token of some one’s approach, and soon a tremulous voice called through the key-hole:

“Who’s that?”

“It’s Davy Drew,” replied the watchman; “and if that ain’t Hepsibah, I’m mistaken.”

There came no answer to this; but in a minute the door was opened, and he stood face to face with a woman whose strange likeness to himself betokened near relationship. There was the same eccentric nose, the same light blue eyes, the same long, prominent upper lip, and the same low, deeply marked forehead. But, while the watchman was as rosy as a pippin, this woman was, at that moment at least, pallid to the very lips.

“Why, Hepsibah, what ails you, woman?” said the watchman, as his eyes rested on the face illuminated by the rays of the lamp she bore. “You look as though you’d seen a ghost!”

“You don’t expect anybody to look merry in this house to-night, do you?” asked Hepsibah.

“To-night! Why, what’s the matter?” The watchman lowered his voice, and glanced up the stairs and down the dark passage, as though expecting to see something which might answer his question, and then back again to the woman waiting to speak.

She made an effort to answer, groped blindly with her hands, as one does when struggling against a swoon, and then clutched his arm with a grip that made him wince, and all the while no audible sound reached him, though her lips moved.

“Hepsibah! woman!” said the watchman, in a horrified, husky whisper, “are you a goin’ mad? Tell me, what is the matter?”

Then she found voice, such a one as we might expect a ghost to speak in.

“I’ll tell you, Davy,” she said; “come up-stairs with me. Don’t make a noise. They’re too busy to care much who comes in or out. Keep quiet, for my sake,” and turning, she ascended the stairs, and opening a door, led the way into a room curtained and carpeted, and cheerful with fire and candle light.

There she locked the door, and crouched down before the grate, with her back to the old watchman.

“She’s very bad, Brother Dave,” she said; “quite low. The surgeon is with her now. There’s just the faintest chance for her now.”

“The squire’s wife, you mean?” asked old Davy.

“Who else should I? That’s no one coming, is it?”

“No. Sally, what ails you?”

“I’m going mad, Davy.”

“You’ve seen a many die dearer to you, and never went mad through it. The fiend’s abroad to-night, and after all the women.”

“He’ll have me soon,” said the woman.

“Oh, Davy! you’re my brother; you’re all I’ve got in

the wide world. We're two old people together. Can't you help me somehow?"

"Help you!" cried the watchman. "I'd do all I could to help you if I knew what ailed you. Come, tell me, or I'll believe you crazy in earnest. Tell me, Hepsibah."

The woman arose and went toward the bed, turning down the sheet, so that the light fell full upon the form of a little infant, lying there in its embroidered robes.

"It's the squire's baby," she said.

"Ay," said the watchman; "and a purty little critter, too. How still it sleeps."

"It sleeps so sound that it will never wake again until the judgment day," said the woman. "Oh, Davy, Brother Davy! it's dead, stone dead—and I've killed it! I, miserable wretch, I have killed it!"

"Killed it!" the watchman repeated the words dreamily, as though not comprehending them. "Killed it! What does it mean, Hepsibah?"

"What I say," replied the woman. "Oh, Davy, I loved it so, and I loved her so, yet I've killed it! This is how it was: Missus, from the time she began to make the little dresses for that darling, used to complain of a pain in her chest; and lately, since the child came, it has been a deal worse; so a great doctor from New York came down, and he and more of 'em have decided that there was a cancer, or a tumor, or something, which must be cut out, or she'd die. They put it off as long as they could, but yesterday they said it must be done; and master said to me, 'Hepsibah, there'll be plenty to take care of her; you only see to the baby and keep it from her.' I was glad to do it, Dave, for I was too nervous to bear to see them torturing my dear missus, poor lamb; so I shut myself up with baby here, where I couldn't hear her scream. I don't know what it was—nervousness, may be; but I hadn't been here three hours before I took the toothache, and most went mad with it. Cook came in, and says she, 'I tell you, laudanum in the ear is the best thing for it, and I've got some,' and up she went and brought down a bottle, and gave it to me. I put it on the shelf when I'd used it, meaning to give it back when she came in again. Poor baby never was so cross; it cried all the time—milk did it no good, nor anything else;

and, at last, master came to the door, and says he, ‘Hepsibah, keep the child quiet. She’ll hear it, and worry.’ It’s against my rules to do it often, but being such a case, I thought I’d give the dear some drops, and so I did. That was at eight in the evening. He went to sleep like a lamb, and I went to sleep, too ; but, oh, David, half an hour ago I waked up and looked at him. He was as cold as a piece of ice ! I got frightened, and tried to wake him ; it was no use. In three minutes I knew the child was dead, and how it happened, for the bottle of drops stood there full, and the laudanum bottle was almost empty. I’ve poisoned my darling lady’s child, Davy ; and if there’d been enough left I’d done the same to myself. Oh, what’s that ? what’s that ?”

In pressing against the bundle in his arms as he leant over the bed, Davy Drew aroused the child, and it began to cry.

“It’s the child, Hepsibah,” said the watchman. “That was what brought me here. The devil has been abroad to catch the women-folks this wretched night, I do believe. You won’t care about hearing my story now, you feel so bad, Hepsy.”

“Yes, I will !” cried the woman. “Speak ! you don’t know what may come of it.”

She had taken the infant from the watchman’s arms as she spoke, and was soothing it to silence, and in much the sort of terror one might feel in an awful dream.

Davy Drew told his story to his sister. She was too much astonished already to feel any more surprise.

When the tale ended, she dropped upon her knees before him, clasping her hands, and praying him to save her, as he could, from disgrace and misery.

“What can I do, Hepsibah ?” he said. “Tain’t in me to bring the dead to life, or I would, I’m sure. That’s all ’ud help you now.”

“All !” cried Hepsibah, with a strange laugh. “Don’t you see, Dave ? There’s a way to keep me from being disgraced—punished, maybe ! There’s a way to keep in the house, instead of being turned out like a dog ; and who’d have me afterward, I’d like to know, in their nurseries ? Poisoned a baby—Squire Shelbourne’s baby—they’d say ;

and I might starve afore they'd have me ! Who'd blame 'em ? Oh, Dave, promise me ye'll do it afore I tell ye how."

"She's crazy !" mumbled Davy. "Why, old gal, I'd be willing to cut my right hand off if 'twould get ye out of this scrape !"

"Give me the baby, then," said the woman.

"The baby ?" David only stared.

"Look ye, Davy Drew," said his sister, "they are as like as two peas. This one has black eyes, so has that. They're the same size ; likely the same age. Who'd know them, if I changed their clothes ? Not you."

"You're right there, Hepsy," said the watchman.

"Nor the squire nor my lady," said Hepsibah. "D'ye understand me now, Davy ? Speak, man !"

"I do begin to," muttered the watchman. "But it can't be done. I've tried to live a Christian life. You'd not ask it if ye think a minute—you're crazy like now !"

"What harm would it be, Dave ?" said the woman.

"Great harm," said the watchman. "There's squire, he'd be deceived, and the missus, too ; and think of the lies I'd have to tell, and you, too !"

"We would neither of us have to speak a word, good or bad," said the woman.

"We should tell no lies ?"

"Not one, Davy ; they'd ask no questions ; and, as for you, who's to tell ? You met the woman in the dark of the night ; and she, poor soul, is under the water by this time. Let me have that baby, and I'll dress this in its clothes, and you may lay it at any door in the place, and it will find a grave. That's all it's own father could give it ; and you'll save that one from the poor-house. You'll do good, and no harm, Davy."

"It's a wrong act," said the watchman. "I'll have nought to do with it."

"Then take a knife and kill me, Davy. You might as well."

"Oh, Hepsy, Hepsy !"

"You might, Davy. Mother never thought you'd turn your back on me when trouble came. When she was dying we stood beside her, and says she, 'Be good to Sister

Hepsy, you're all she has to look to.' And says you, 'When I forsake her, may Heaven forsake me!' I mind it well."

"Haven't I been a brother to you, girl?" said the old man, his eyes filling with tears. "I've tried to be."

"I know you have till now, Davy," said the old woman. "I don't deny it; but you don't care for me now, or you'd save me. It's only whether yonder poor baby shall lie in Shelbourne vault or in a little grave, without a stone, amongst the poor. That will do it no harm, Davy. The same sod will be above it, and its soul is in Heaven already. Oh, Davy, have pity on me!"

She went down on her knees again as she spoke, and clung to him desperately. "I couldn't bear that shame," she said. "The whole place to know it—mistress that has thought so much of me, and all! I shall die! Oh, Davy, I *will*, if the disgrace comes to me! Save me! save me!"

The old man was crying like a baby by this time. Tears chased each other down the deep wrinkled grooves plowed in his brown cheeks by the hand of time. All he could say was: "Hepsy, girl! oh, Hepsy, girl!" over and over again.

"Davy, say yes!" pleaded the woman.

"No, no!" replied the watchman. "No; you'll not ask me to-morrow yourself—you're about crazy now!"

At these words the old woman arose slowly, and looked at her brother with eyes full of terrible meaning.

"I'll ask you no more," she said; "but, mark you, I'll never see the light of black to-morrow! I'll kill myself to-night! Davy, I've the means in my power, and I'll use them. I'll never live to be disgraced, and dragged before a court of justice, and hanged, maybe! No, I'll kill myself to-night!"

The old watchman saw that she was in earnest, and her last words had brought an awful picture before his mind. He dropped his head upon his hands, and said no more; and old Hepsibah knew that she had gained her object!

She lifted the dead child in her arms, and handed it to her brother.

"Changing its clothes would do no good," she said. "All babies' night-slips are about alike, and its things are

not marked. I've taken no pains dressing it in fine robes, while no one but me was to see it ; and I can't bear to see the little creature as I've often bathed and fixed so pretty. Oh, Dave ! I loved the darling so, as I might a grandchild of my own, if I'd a had one. What shall I do ? My heart'll break ! Only to think on it lying in its little grave, without a flower or a stone ! ” and she began to weep.

“ Don't do it, Hepsibah ; don't do it,” said the watchman. “ Come, there's time yet ; and no one will think that you'd do harm to the babby o' purpose. Come, Hepsibah, now ; you'll be a happier woman for it.”

But there was no command in his voice, only persuasion, and Hepsibah rallied at his words.

“ No,” she said, wiping her eyes with her apron. “ I'll not live to be hooted through the streets, or to be shut up in prison, or mayhap hung ! No, no. God knows it's not my fault. I'd lie dead this minute rather than have that dear creature a corpse, a thing I've been more a mother to than its own. And at the judgment-day He will not write me down a murderess ; but people would, wicked sinners like myself. Dave, take the little love away, and God bless you for lifting part of my burden on your shoulders. I'll pray for you when I'm past words, for that act. Good-by, Dave ; good-by, good-by ! ”

She opened the door, and half led, half pushed the watchman into the entry.

“ I'll light you down,” she said. “ Come, now, don't linger ; any minute master may come up the stairs. It's done, now, you know. Good-by. Go softly. Dave you're a good brother to me in my trouble.”

And the bewildered watchman found himself upon the road, without the great mansion, with the dead child a cold burden in his arms, before he could collect his senses sufficiently to make any remonstrance.

“ There is a fate in it,” he muttered. “ I said as how the devil was abroad to catch the women folks ; but I reckon he has eye to the men folks, too. Who'd ever have thought o' me—Honest Dave the watchman, as some calls me—turning knave at my time o' life ! The Lord bless us. He knows 'twill be a weight on my soul as long as I live ; and only for Hepsibah I'd never have done it. But the gal

was left to my care when mammy died, and was a pretty young critter, then ; and even now we are both old, it seems as if she ought to look to me for protection like. Lord bless us ! I wish she'd asked me to chop off my right hand, or put out my right eye, and I'd a done it willingly compared to this. Well, I must go to the poor-house with it, I reckon. As well first as last. She don't repent, I s'pose ; she'd have had time to call me back. I've done it, and I must abide by it." So saying, the watchman trotted away, folding his coat about the form of the dead infant, as though it could feel the piercing blasts or the cold drenching of the rain, and made his way toward the long gray building devoted to charitable purposes, which was the pride of Carltonville.

It was a night to make the pleasantest road wretched, and the most cheerful dwelling gloomy in its outward aspect. As the road which led to Carltonville poor-house was at any time desolate and lonely, an irregular, badly cut affair, full of miniature mountains and valleys, broken stones, and traps of all kinds for the feet of unwary travelers ; so hedged in, moreover, by banks of rocks and tangled trees and bushes that even summer moonlight could not light it up ; and upon such a night as this the watchman's lantern alone prevented him from being lost, or stumbling into some deep hole or mud pond.

As for the poor-house itself, it was a low gray prison-like affair, with barred windows, and no vestige of verdure about its little yards covered with hard gravel, rolled smooth by aged paupers at regular intervals. Perhaps it was to show how cold charity could be, that it had been built upon the very spot where the keenest winds swept in upon the town at winter time. There were public lands in sheltered dells, farther from the wild seaside, amid woods, or where bright gardens might have cheered the scene ; but this spot had seemed to the wise authorities a very God-send for the site of an alms-house, and there it was erected. Not even a pine-tree flung its shadow over it.

As the watchman approached the building, his heart sank within him, and vague apprehensions wrought upon his mind. For the first time in his life he was called upon to utter and act a falsehood. That in itself was sufficient to

make him wretched to the last degree. Then, he had a reverence for death, which made him feel a sort of horror in being the instrument by which the little corpse in his arms was deprived of burial in the great family vault in which the Shelbournes had lain for three generations. And, in his simple mind, thoughts of dread stories told of evil spirits which hovered on men's footsteps, and stood before them at last, white and horrible, to drive them mad, were faintly combatted by the religious feelings he had cherished in his humble heart for many years.

Over the grim, black door of the poor-house an oil lamp swung, just showing the iron knocker with a lion's head pendant from the panels. Far up in one of the long and narrow windows, a gleam fell upon the uncurtained window-pane, to tell that some one was watching, perhaps beside a sick bed. All else was dark and quiet as the grave.

The watchman stood gazing upward, seemingly unable to move either backward or forward. A damp moisture bathed his brow, and his limbs trembled under him. For one moment he gazed sea-ward—with the temptation strong upon him to cast the little body thither, and escape the ordeal of question and answer which awaited him, but the next he asked God to forgive him for the wicked thought.

“I should be worse than I am,” he said. “No, I’ll not do it! And I’ll try to keep from lying, if I can, right out and out in words;” and thus speaking, he stepped forward, and gave the iron knocker two such raps upon the door as brought an answer in the shortest possible space of time.

Old David blessed his stars that the man with whom he had to deal was only an old pauper, trembling with age, and half blind to boot, and who was also too much aggrieved by being called from his bed at such an hour to pay much heed to the manner of his disturber.

“It’s you, is it?” he muttered. “I thought as I was gettin’ out o’ my warm bed ’twere either a watchman, or a doctor from the hangin’! As if a body was ready to hop out o’ their warm bed like a flea, at a minute’s warning! What’s wantin’?”

“I’ve a babby here,” said the watchman. “Tell ’em that as Davy Drew was walking his beat to-night, he spied a woman with a babby, and followed her to the wharf.

There she tried to jump in, and he stopped her and coaxed her away ; but soon she got him to take the babby, and then cut and run."

"Got who?" asked the pauper.

"Me—Davy Drew, the watchman."

"Lor', I know who you be well enough," said the pauper. "So this is the babby?"

"You don't think it's another un, do you?" asked Davy.

"Lor', no, to be sure," said the pauper, with a giggle, which instantly subsided as he muttered, "Couldn't you ha' kep' it somewheres, and not took people out of their warm beds afore morning?"

"You see, I'm a bachelor," said David. "If I'd had a woman, I might. Good-bye. Shall I be wanted again?"

"They'll send for you if they do," said the pauper. "But I hope they'll be reasonable enough not to do it in the middle of the night, takin' you out o' your warm bed ; as you don't mind doin to other folks, I do!"

And with these words the door was banged to again in the watchman's face.

With that cold burden lifted from his arms, part of the weight was taken from old Davy's heart. Yet it was heavy still, and those who met him in the dawn, going homeward, shook their heads, and said that such nights as those were too much for an old man, and that Davy was breaking down fast.

CHAPTER III.

ALONE WITH THE SECRET.

AFTER her brother's departure, Hepsibah sat beside the fire, with the babe upon her knee, staring at the glowing coals with all her might, and feeling that she had passed safely through a terrible ordeal.

"I shall have a weight upon my mind all my life long," she said ; "and it will be hard to bear, I know. But I shan't be hung, or I shan't be hooted through the town for

a woman that has been to court for murdering a child, which would be worse ; and missus will be happy, and master and this poor creature, bless it !—ah ! what's that ? what's that ? Mercy upon us, what's that ? ”

She might well ask. Through the house swept a terrible sound, that curdled the blood of the listener. Was it that of a human voice ?—could it be ? Then a heavy fall shook the house, and set the glasses jingling upon a little table in the corner ; then feet came flying down the stairs, and the nursery door was shaken from without.

“ Hepsy, Hepsy ! for de love of Heaven open dis door ! Oh, Lord ! dis awful night ! Oh, Hepsy ! ”

The old woman covered the baby hastily with a quilt as she laid it down upon the bed and opened the door. Black Deborah, the cook, stood there, her eyes rolling from side to side in terror.

“ Oh, Hepsy,” she moaned, “ poor young missus stone dead, and massa has fell down in a fit alongside of her bed ! ”

“ Dead ? ” said Hepsy. “ Oh, no, she's only fainted ! Nobody talked of her being in any danger ! ”

“ Hepsy, she's clean dead ; dere ain't no more life in her nor in a stone. Oh, dat lubly, dear pretty lady. Dey killed her wid sleepin' stuff, Hepsy.”

“ Laudanum ? ” gasped Hepsibah.

“ No, chloroform, dat's it, Hepsy. Dey had to cut her lily-white bosom wid cruel knives, and dey gabe her dat stuff so she shouldn't feel no pain ; an' she didn't—she won't never feel no more, Hepsy. When dere butcherin' was ober dey tried to wake her up ; but she neber stirred, do all dey could. An' de doctors, dey looked pale an' 'changed looks wid each other. Says massa, says he, ‘ Is anything the matter ? ’ Says dey, ‘ We hopes not. ’ But, Hepsy, I seen den jess what dey was afeard on. I know'd my missus 'ud neber wake agin. Den dey was all standin' dere with dere eyes on her, and massa says, ‘ Dis unconscious lasts too long. Do something,’ says he. An' says dey, ‘ Speak to her, sah. ’ An' says he, ‘ Oh, my darlin', look up !—one word—one look—only one ! ’ an' oh ! Hepsy, she what lubs de berry ground he walks on neber stirred. Den says he, ‘ My dear, 'member your baby ; lib

for our boy's sake ! ' an' she laid just as still as eber. Oh, I dunno what come after dat, Hepsy. I just went onto my knees, prayin' Lord Jesus, what hears eben ole niggers' prayers, to take dat white soul up to Heaben. An' den I heard a scream, and massa he fell down on the floor in a swoond. Dat chloroform stuff has killed my pretty lady ! Dat baby has got no mother now, Hepsy," and the faithful negress bent her head upon her knees and wept aloud in the passionate and child-like fashion of her race.

Hepsibah wept also.

"Is the squire in any danger, Deborah ?" she asked.

"I tink not," said Deb. "De doctor genplemen is doin' eberyting for him. Better he die, dough, an' go to Heaben. I knows what he's got to bear. When I 'longed to Massa Peyton down in Georgy, an' was a young, good-lookin' gal, dey sold my man an' my chile from me ; 'peared like 'twas parting soul and body. Only for dat baby I'd say better let him die."

Hepsibah shook her head and glanced toward the bed, where a little hand was tossing restlessly. She had not dressed the babe yet, and there were splashes of mud upon its garments, despite the thick shawl which had enveloped it while out of doors. The garments must be changed, if she would avoid detection, though with the emotion consequent on the events of that awful night. Hepsibah's hands trembled so as to render her almost incapable of accomplishing the task. Yet time was passing, and detection yet possible. She longed to be rid of the poor negress.

At last she thought of an expedient.

"Deborah," she said, "it's most broad day. They'll be wanting breakfast, those doctors, and the servants, too, who have been up all of this long night."

"Yes, I s'pose dey will," said Deb, rising. "But I can't help feelin' as if dey had murdered missus, and sort o' hate 'em. No matter what ole Deb tink, dough. I'll go make breaktwist. Oh, Hepsy, we won't neber hear her comin' down to sit at de long table any more ! Dat poor, pretty lady."

Away she went into the dark hall, huddling her shoulders in a shawl she wore, and sobbing as she hurried on, half frightened by the shadows.

Hepsy locked the door behind her, with a feeling of relief, and proceeded at once to execute the task of changing the babe's garments.

Opening a bureau drawer, she drew forth dainty cambric and soft, fleecy flannel, tiny golden chains to loop back the little sleeves from the dimpled arms, soft scarlet socks for the plump feet, and so carefully laid aside by the young mother, now lying shrouded in the room above.

Hepsibah Drew remembered her very words, as she sat before the fire with the last-finished garment on her knee, seeming to look into the future with her great blue eyes, and with a happy blush upon her soft, round cheek.

"And that I should deceive her; that I should do what I have done! I'd never have believed it if an angel had told me!" said Hepsibah. "I wonder whether she watches me from Heaven, and forgives me!"

The old woman's tears fell fast, yet she bustled about, continuing her preparations steadily.

"No use o' stoppin' now," she said; "I've gone too far; it 'ud only do harm, nothin' else, to me or anybody."

There was a bright little nursery kettle, of burnished copper, on the grate, steaming and puffing merrily. From this Hepsibah half filled the porcelain bath, tempering it with cold water from the ewer; then she brought one by one all the dainty accessories of a child's toilette—powder-box and puff; soap, like a ball of compressed snow; cologne water, and towels of the finest fabric. Next she drew a low chair to the spot, and brought the babe thither from the bed.

It was wide awake, but it uttered neither cry nor wail; on the contrary it made pretty little faces of delight, and strove to grasp the bright brooch which fastened her collar.

It was a beautiful child; more beautiful even than the little creature whose place it had taken. The old nurse had never seen a lovelier infant.

One by one she withdrew its garments, which were fine and well made, though much soiled by the exposure of the night, and the dimpled limbs felt the first touch of the mild and perfumed water of the bath.

Whether Hepsibah swooned or was taken with a fit just then, she never knew. Whatever it was came upon her

with a rapidity and deathliness which ever after defied all efforts of memory. She was only certain that she remained unconscious for hours. The sun was high when she opened her eyes and stared about her. She was in her chair still, and fortunately, as well as strangely, she had grasped the arm of the infant instead of relaxing her hold. Fortunately, also, her capacious lap and warm, woolen raiment, had shielded the infant from any draught.

It was weeping bitterly, but neither chilled nor in any way injured, save that her fingers had clutched the small arm somewhat harshly, leaving a red impression on the soft skin. It seemed a miracle that the little creature was not lying on the floor, or even in the fire, to which they were so close.

Hepsibah slowly regained her strength and the use of her senses. She looked about her, and found her first comfort in the remembrance that the door was locked.

“Dave was right,” she said. “Satan has been abroad to-night. I wonder I haven’t had a stroke, or that I ain’t dead outright. If I’d not a bin made of iron instead of flesh and blood, I would have been. I wish I was! I wish I was! It’s been an awful night! I wonder can I keep my senses, or maybe I’m mad already! It’s more like delirium than aught else!”

So muttering, Hepsibah Drew exerted her returning strength, dressed the infant, fed it; and when it was once more asleep, sat down, and stared into the dying embers, like one who had indeed taken leave of her senses

CHAPTER IV.

ALIVE.

ON the morning following the visit of David Drew to the poor-house, a gentleman attired in a spruce morning-gown and slippers, sauntered slowly from his own apartments at one end of that grim building, toward the sick ward of the establishment. He was in no haste to reach his destination, as he had been in no haste to rise, or to finish his late

breakfast. Dr. Rawdon was never in a hurry, never seemingly much moved or interested in anything. He was a heavily built man, with small black eyes, and a well shaven double chin, and had probably reached the age of forty-five.

Passing a clock upon the staircase, he took out his watch, and looked at it. It was half-past nine o'clock, the minute hands touched the sign of the half-hour in both timepieces, as he turned the handle of the door at the further end of the hall.

It was a long room, with a recess at one end. Narrow beds, covered with blue check, were ranged along it, and in half a dozen of them lay sick paupers.

The doctor sauntered along, feeling the pulses and examining the tongues of his patients.

To one old man he said:

“You’ll do now—you shall have some wine to-day, to strengthen you.”

To the next he said nothing; he lay asleep. The third, still another old man, was surveyed with a sort of cool disgust.

“You’ll get up to-day, take your place, and go to sweeping,” he said. “I told you before that I suspected you had been drinking on the day you were let out to see your grand-daughter, and I know it now.”

And he sauntered on, deaf to the old man’s refutation of the charge.

The other patients were children, suffering from the measles. The doctor said some placidly good-natured words to these, and then advanced toward the recess, from which a door opened, and in which, at work near the window, sat the nurse, a comfortable, elderly woman, who looked up as he advanced.

“Any new patients in the women’s ward?” he asked.

“No, sir.”

“Then I’ll not go in. Old age can’t be cured, and that’s all that ails Nelly Cragan. How’s her appetite?”

“Wonderful, sir, for soft victuals.”

“She’ll live a week or so yet, I shouldn’t wonder. Oh, how about the dead baby? I must see that, of course.”

The woman arose and led the way. He followed.

Through the women's ward, where old Nelly Cragan lay dying of old age alone, the two comfortable visitors passed to the further end, where something lay under the blankets of the bed.

The doctor turned sharply.

"I thought you had more sense, Mrs. Mills," he said. "What was your motive in covering a dead child with warm blankets?"

Mrs. Mills looked confused.

"It seemed so little and lonely," she said, "I felt as though it were asleep. It was silly, I know, but I couldn't get it out of my head that it could feel cold."

The doctor made no remark. He lifted the little form from its nest, and examined it, first as a sort of form, next with some interest. At last he laid the child in bed and re-covered it.

"On the whole you have done the best thing possible, Mrs. Mills," he said. "The child is alive!"

"Alive! Oh, doctor!"

"I don't say it will live," said the doctor, "but it may. It is in a stupor, either consequent on convulsions, or some narcotic. In the latter case, I will tell you what to do; in the former you can do nothing."

He gave some directions, in his usual placid voice, to the attentive nurse, bade her come to him in an hour, to tell him the result of her efforts, and sauntered away, stopping only to ask old Nelly Cragan some questions, which set her garrulously chattering about herself, and leaving the room while she was talking.

Then, his morning's work being over, unless something new transpired, the doctor returned to his own snug little parlor and his favorite author.

It was nearly eleven when a rap came at the door. It was Mrs. Mills.

"Well!" said the doctor.

"About the child, sir?"

"Oh, yes—sit down. Dead, I suppose?"

"No, sir. I applied the remedies and did all as you directed; and the little thing has been brought back to life again by them. It took some milk five minutes ago, and its eyes are wide open. It's a very fine baby, indeed, sir."

How any mother could have had the heart to use it so I can't think."

"Women have the heart to do anything, I believe," muttered the doctor. "I hope this boy will remember what he owes to one of them."

"There, there," continued the doctor, after a pause, "your patients will need you, Mrs. Mills. If the child needs waiting on, have one of the old women up to help you. Ann Hogan would be the best—the least likely, I think, to drop it into the fire. Good morning, Mrs. Mills."

And the nurse retired, too well used to the doctor's ways to feel hurt at this summary dismissal.

The baby was numbered from that moment amongst the regular inmates of the poor-house.

Old Davy Drew might well say that Satan had been abroad in the storm that bitter night.

The heir of Shelbourne's wide lands and full coffers lay upon the knee of a poor-house nurse, and the child rescued by the watchman from a watery grave, deserted by an unknown mother—the child of misery, perhaps of shame—occupied its position in its father's home and heart

CHAPTER V.

THE FATHER'S DEPARTURE.

SQUIRE SHELBOURNE lived. The time came when he arose, and trod once more the desolate halls of his home-stead; when the soft spring air tempted him into the garden, or out into the woods, which lay beyond the village, but nothing comforted him—nothing interested him. All his walks ended at the graveyard, beside his young wife's tomb. All his thoughts went thither, even when his feet remained within his own parlor—lonely now to him as a desert.

Day or night it was the same. His love had been very strong; his hopes for the future many. It was impossible for him to forget for one moment in that house, so haunted by a thousand memories.

His physician grew alarmed. At last he told him plainly that he must change the scene or die.

Walter Shelbourne did not care to live, but he felt it his duty to prolong his life for his child's sake.

He accepted the doctor's mandate. He chose for his destination, by advice, the West Indies, and made arrangements for departure much as one might make those for a funeral, and with none of the eager interest of one bound upon a pleasant journey. When they were completed, he went, for the first time in three days, into the nursery, and sat down beside the child's cradle.

Hepsy was knitting small, snow-white socks for the child, just a year old that day. She said "good morning," and was silent. Somehow she always seemed alarmed and anxious whenever Mr. Shelbourne entered the nursery.

"My boy is asleep?" said the father.

"Yes, sir," said Hepsy, "baby is asleep."

"He is well?"

"Very well, sir."

"Hepsy, has any one told you that I am going away to-morrow?"

"Going away, sir? No; I never seen any one but Deb. I hadn't heard."

"I am ordered to the West Indies."

"That's a long way, sir. Will you stay long?"

"Perhaps not—perhaps for years. I may die there."

Hepsy turned pale. She dared not ask the question which was in her mind. She looked from the baby's crib to Mr. Shelbourne and back again. She ceased to knit and waited. The next words came from her master.

"I have been thinking of my child. It is, I think, best not to take it with me. You have done well with my boy; I will leave him in your charge, and here."

"Thank Heaven!" The words burst involuntarily from the old nurse's lips, great drops stood out upon her forehead, and she trembled violently.

"Do you love my child so?" asked Mr. Shelbourne, in a faltering voice. "My poor, motherless boy!"

"Oh, sir, I should die if you took him from me. I should die!"

"I am glad you are fond of him. Listen! The house

will be partly shut up. The kitchen, this nursery and a few other rooms will be open, and in use. Deborah will remain here and yourself. The other servants will be, of course, dismissed. If you are timid, you can have your brother David here when you choose. In case of the child's illness you will summon Dr. Ritchie. Of course, any serious occurrences you will notify me at once. From time to time you will hear from me, and my instructions must be implicitly obeyed."

"Yes, sir; they shall."

"I am sure of it. In case of my death, my sister will become my child's guardian, but if I live I desire that he shall be brought up here. The time may come when I shall return, and be a man again. Just now——"

He paused, stooped over the child, and kissed it. As he did so it awoke. The little thing was very frail and very fair. It had soft, sweet black eyes, and a mouth like a rosebud. Instead of struggling and crying as most babies do when awakened from a nap, it smiled and crowed merrily.

The father's heart was melted. Hitherto the love for his dead wife had absorbed every emotion save that of duty. For the first time he had kissed it; now he folded it against his breast and wept.

"My darling, my darling! it is your child!" he said; "the child of our love! God bless it! God make it happier than its father! Good-bye, little one, good-bye! I may never see you again. I wish you could understand me and answer me. Good-bye!"

More kisses, more unrestrained tears, and he laid the infant in its crib once more, and held out his thin, white-fingered hand to Hepsy.

"Be good to the little thing," he said, "and God bless you!" and passed out of the nursery into the wide hall, shutting the door softly behind him.

At six that evening he left the house. As the carriage drove away, the two old servants stood at the hall door.

"He's gone," said Deborah, "an' de Lord only knows wedder he'll eber come back agin," and she wiped the tears from her eyes as she spoke.

“Aye, he’s gone.” repeated Hepsy, but her tone was one of satisfaction, scarcely repressed.

Five minutes after she was alone in the nursery, crouched down beside the cradle.

“A little while longer,” she whispered; “a little while longer. I can draw a free breath. The secret is safe until he comes back—at least, unless I die. I’ve no one to dread but Deborah; and who would be afraid of her? Safe for a while—safe, safe—even Davy does not guess it yet!”

CHAPTER VI.

THE DOCTOR’S PET.

YEARS pass as quickly in the poorhouse as in other places. The life at that of Carltonville had rolled on through the twelve months much as usual. Some of the old paupers were dead—the youngest and heartiest, so said the older ones who remained. Oddly enough, Nellie Cragan was among the living. Doctors are not infallible. Dr. Rawdon prided himself much on his power of drawing a diagnosis. This time he had been set at naught by an old woman, who had not died of old age, when he said she should. Nelly Cragan ate her spoon victuals, and chattered as she had a year before, though she lay for the most part on her bed, and complained continually of “rheumatics in her back,” which the doctor declared was nothing but “the pains of old age.”

There were two other foundlings and a little orphan among the children; and the child David Drew brought to the door, as he believed, dead, upon that storm night, a year ago, was considered one of the older ones.

By virtue of his year of life, he was beginning to take care of himself. A lusty child, large of limb and rosy, he could already walk. He was able to approach the fender which guarded the hot stove, and learn by experience that it burnt his fingers. He was permitted to teach himself much

as Adam, had he come into this world a child, must have commenced his self-education.

In three years petted babes fail to learn as much of the dangers of fire and water, and high places, and sharp instruments, as this poorhouse child in one. He had been burnt on the elbow; nearly drowned in the wash-tub; scissors had penetrated his soft fingers; he had tumbled down-stairs and out of a window—luckily one on the first floor. Being a very sagacious baby, he had finally learned to take care of himself.

One thing, however, was evident—the child had no idea of the difference due to his superiors. Had he occupied his lawful position in the world, and been the petted heir of Mr. Shelbourne, he could not have conducted himself with more independence.

The doctor—that mighty power to whom nurses courted, and paupers bobbed their heads deferentially—that individual to whose skirts no other pauper baby dared cling, was the object of his preference.

Every day escaping easily enough from the blinking eyes which kept watch over the pauper children, this particular one waddled down the hall, backed down the stairs at the end, and standing with his back toward the doctor's door, would give it three or four slow thumps with all the power of its little frame. If as often happened the door was a little ajar, it opened easily in this way, and baby waddled into the sanctum.

At first the slow, moving head of the stout doctor would turn toward the intruder with surprise. An impulse to call some one to take the child away came naturally enough; but while considering it the baby would complete his stratagem by backing against the door to shut it, and waddling toward him, would remark, in the language peculiar to his time of life:

“Ugh! Dot, wa wa ee.”

What was meant by this the doctor could not guess.

Then relinquishing his wish to be rid of his visitor, the doctor would placidly watch the child, permit its approach, let it sit down on the floor at his feet, and say nothing until visions of gruel, or bread and milk floating through the child's brain, made him manifest an anxiety to be gone, by

bumping his shoulders against the door once more. Then the doctor would arise and let his visitor out, still never speaking.

Soon he began to expect the baby's coming—to listen to the patter in the hall—to open the door if it were closed, to respond to the unintelligible :

“Ugh! Dot, wa wa ee.”

One day he bought sugar plums with a special view to his morning caller; and fed him with them with an odd pleasure. At last a curiosity to know what the child's speech meant got the better of him, and he made a special errand to the nursery.

Baby in particular was investigating the ashes on the stone hearth. Babies in general were bawling, tumbling down, being washed and sleeping.

The woman in charge rubbed a chair with her apron, and offered it to the doctor.

At that the young gentleman in the ashes lifted his head around, and ejaculated, as usual,

“Ugh! Dot, wa wa ee,” and came forward.

“Take keer, doctor; he'll make them nice, clean pants o' yourn a sight with his nasty ashes,” cried the woman, making a grab at the offending infant; “but, sir, to hear him talk—he, he!”

“What is he saying?” asked the doctor, glad to come to the answer without appearing to be anxious on the subject.

“Why, don't you know?” asked the old woman. “It's as plain as print. He's saying what you says yourself, doctor, to us, only he puts in your name.”

“‘Ugh! Dot, wa wa ee’—that's ‘Well, doctor, how are we?’ He, he, he!”

The doctor made no answer. He did not betray himself. Soon he left the room; but when next the little form plattered into his sanctum with its salutation, the stout giant in the chair bent down, held out a finger and answered :

“Well, well, how are we?”

After that the conversation always accompanied the visit. All his life through he had been a lonely man. He had neither sister nor brother. He had never married. He was reserved even with his friends. This child, to all ap-

pearance a mere pauper infant—no different in position from any other—had crept into his heart as nothing ever had before.

Something of a father's joy in his child's love he knew, when that little creature in its coarse garments stood at his knee, or lifted upon it, nestled in his bosom.

The lips that had never kissed living lips for years pressed that baby's now. The heavy tomes were laid aside for the pleasure of sitting in silent communion with that wee mortal, and the best of all was, it was a secret. No one knew where that baby hid itself when missing. Mrs. Mills never suspected the doctor, of whom she stood in such awe, of entertaining such a guest. The old woman in the nursery fancied it went to Mrs. Mills, when she thought at all.

The doctor was secretive by nature. Even in childhood, toys and pastimes of which no one knew, delighted him most. Birds' nests of which no other boy had guessed, puppies hidden in the garret, places to fish suspected by no one else. So through his life, even in his profession, to the very verge of what the faculty call "quackery," for he would have liked to make patent medicines, all his own, for his sole use, and absolutely had remedies of which he had never spoken to any one.

So this child's love, and his for it, and their intimacy being a secret, was all the more delicious, and all the stronger, and from it were slowly growing certain plans and projects to be matured, in the time to come. How, the doctor only knew. What, he was scarcely likely to tell any one. They were plans for his old age and this baby's manhood—plans a father might have had for an only son. They were delightful for the first time in many years—they associated some one's happiness—some one's life with his own.

"Time enough, time enough," thought the doctor. "I like to keep the secret to myself awhile, and I'm only forty-five. Plenty of time."

Poor dying worms that we are, there is always time enough for us. We all intend to live a good while yet. The oldest, the poorest, and the unhealthiest. We shake our heads at others' plans and projects, but for ourselves there is always plenty of time.

CHAPTER VII.

A SEARCH BEGUN.

IN one of those tall buildings in New York, devoted to lawyers' offices, engravers' studios and other business places of a like nature, you might have found upon a door on the second floor the name of Harvey Grier, in gilt letters, on a black enameled plate, and opening the aforesaid door, would, upon the fourth of March, 18—, at an early hour in the afternoon, have discovered the proprietor of the name as well as the chambers, seated in a green leathern chair, studded with brass nails, at a small black walnut desk in the middle of the principal office.

He was a slight man, of medium height, not over, and of some thirty-one or two years of age.

He boasted a peculiarly smooth, white forehead, and a remarkably fine Roman profile, together with so sharp a pair of dark gray eyes, that his office boy was positive that he had an extra pair somewhere in the back of his head, among the clustering black curls which adorned it. In dress he was scrupulously neat. In manners, whatever he chose to be, polite, coolly insulting, amiable or severe—one equally capable of encouraging a timid witness or brow-beating an obstinate one. A man who was certain, so said his brother officers, to become eminent in his profession.

At present Mr. Grier was engaged in opening and sorting an enormous pile of letters which had accumulated during a brief absence from the city. Some were perused carefully, others tossed into the waste paper basket with a glance. At last he paused and looked curiously at one. It was directed in a delicate feminine hand; the envelope had something singular in its shape and texture, and the seal was a drop of green wax, stamped with a star; the post-mark, Havana, Cuba.

“Whom do I know in Havana?” he asked himself,

musingly, "Certainly no lady," and as though loth to destroy the pretty envelope, he opened it daintily with his knife at one end.

The letter was written on thin blue foreign paper, without lines. It was as follows :

"HAVANA, Feb. —, 18—.

"MR. HARVEY GRIER :

"Dear Sir—We require your services in a matter of extreme delicacy and importance. Those services, to further the end required, must be entirely confidential. When you have heard what they are you will think of many reasons why publicity must be avoided.

"Enclosed you will find a small fee, which will assure you of our sincerity. Any further demands will be promptly complied with, no matter how great they may be.

"A year and three months ago, on the night of December —th, at or about twelve o'clock, during a terrible storm of snow and hail, the watchman of the place saved a young woman from committing suicide on the wharf at Carltonville, Mass. A short time afterward she contrived to escape from his custody, leaving, however, a young infant in his arms.

"It is presumed that the watchman conveyed the child to the poor-house. He may, however, have given it in charge of some other authorities, or to some private individual. In so small a place the truth will not be difficult to discover. We desire to know (if it lives) the condition and whereabouts of that infant. Once ascertaining its existence, we are willing to do anything possible to restore to its legal guardians one who will be perhaps the wealthiest individual in all Cuba on attaining his majority. At present real names cannot be mentioned. All communications must be addressed to 'Anxiety,' Havana, Cuba.

"Yours respectfully."

The lawyer perused the letter twice, feeling a little injured at the want of confidence displayed by the concealment of the real name of the person who addressed him, and very much interested in the mystery just opening before him.

Soon turning to a desk near by, he selected note paper and envelope, wrote a brief answer, directed it, and summoned Tom, his office boy, from the back room, where he was engaged in cleaning an inkstand.

"Take this to the post office," he said, "and don't stop to stare in windows ; it must go by the next mail."

Tom, who bore the marks of his occupation very plainly upon his face and fingers, obeyed promptly, and the lawyer was alone.

The business of the day was evidently over. Going into a small inner apartment, Mr. Grier washed his hands, brushed his hair, and donned his overcoat and gloves with all the precision of a belle at her ball toilet, and then returned for a moment to his desk.

The letters which he had retained he locked up safely in one compartment behind the black walnut door, which guarded sundry pigeon holes; the letter from Cuba being distinguished as of peculiar importance by being secured in a separate division, which opened with a spring.

After these precautions were complete he left the place, and descending the long stairs, sauntered idly toward Broadway, leaving Master Tom on his return to close up the office.

Had the habits of this young gentleman been known to his employer, he would have been more solicitous as to the security of his private correspondence. Returning to find the lawyer gone, Master Burridge cut a caper, whistled, expressed himself overjoyed to find the coast clear, and at once hung the porcelain slate on the door, locked it, and proceeded to heap the stove with new coals, and to draw the lawyer's own leather-covered chair before it. After this he rummaged the room until he discovered severed fragments of cigars, and coolly taking a number of odd keys from his pocket, unlocked the rosewood desk—not to abstract anything of value, but simply to gratify his curiosity, and to amuse himself by an operation which he termed “playing boss.”

Smoking and reading with the gravity of a judge, Master Tom possessed himself of the contents of the letters rapidly, and was replacing them when he bethought him of the spring drawer. Within it lay one letter—that with the green seal, with a star upon it, and postmarked “Havana.”

Master Tom remarking that “this was from a gal,” treated it as he had the others, and found a fund of reflection in its contents.

“It's like a play,” he said. “Lord, don't I wish I was that young un! ‘The richest person in Cuba on maintaining his majority!’ Ah, *don't* that sound splendid! He's such a jolly time before him! Such a little chap, too! What cigars he can smoke, and what pins he can wear!

He'll never have to clean inkstands and run errands, he won't. That is if he's alive."

And Master Tom returned the letter, locked up the desk, and finished his cigar ends.

In half an hour thereafter they had produced their usual effect, and Tom BurrIDGE was lying very ill upon the floor of the office. He had been trying to learn to smoke for three months, and was convinced that he should never succeed until he had a box of real Havanas of his own and a week's holiday to practice.

At six or thereabouts a very pale boy went home upon the top of the omnibus, to tell his anxious mother that the pickles she had put up with his lunch had not agreed with him.

CHAPTER VIII.

DR. RAWDON TROUBLED FOR ONCE.

DR. RAWDON was seldom agitated. His placid uniformity of temper was not easily disturbed. Partly by nature, and partly in consequence of his own determination to do so, he looked on most things quietly. The best was after all not worth very much, the worst must soon end altogether, it was not worth fretting about. So he generally argued; but on one particular day his theory failed to be of practical use; and, to his own astonishment, an event occurred which rendered him completely miserable.

A letter, bearing the New York postmark, had reached him. It was that from Mr. Grier; and read as follows:

NEW YORK, March —, —

DEAR SIR:

Understanding that you have the supervision of the Carltonville poorhouse, I take the liberty of addressing you on a subject on which you can probably give me the most reliable information. I am assured by a client—whose name I suppress—that on the — of December, 18—, a child was left in charge of a watchman by a person whom he endeavored to arrest, but who escaped his vigilance. It seems probable that the man should have conveyed it to your charitable and excellent institution, in which case you, of course, have a record of the

event, and will be happy to aid in restoring the child to the care of its natural guardians.

You will oblige me greatly by an answer at your earliest possible convenience.

N. RAWDON, M. D.

Yours to command,
HARVEY GRIER.

Letters of this nature had been in the doctor's hands before. Abandoned children had been reclaimed by repentant parents, and his only sentiment had been a sort of quiet pleasure; now the doctor turned pale and stared at the opposite wall, in a perplexed and anxious manner, with the note crumpled in his hand, instead of being methodically folded like the notes which he received. Moreover, though every circumstance was thoroughly remembered, he made no effort to answer the epistle. It was a task he dreaded.

At last a noise broke upon his ear—a sharp patter of tiny feet. Baby was coming. The door was opened and shut.

Dr. Rawdon heard the entrance, but did not look up. He waited until the plump hands rested on his knee, and the voice piped, “Dot! Dot!” over and over again, and still he kept quite still. But baby was fourteen months old by this time, and very adventurous. He climbed a footstool near the armchair, and the little down covered head crept up and touched the doctor's hand.

At that great tears welled up into the doctor's eyes, and with such a movement as you might have expected of a mother, the child was caught up to the man's bosom.

There it nestled, well content, pouring forth its innocent babble, which the doctor had learned to comprehend; grasping at the glittering vest chain, which secured his watch, and conducting himself in a manner unprecedented in a poorhouse baby.

The doctor fairly sobbed.

“I cannot part with you!” he cried. “I love you as though you were my own child! I meant to make you mine; and must I give you up to those who deserted you, because some interested motive prompts them to reclaim you at last? We have the tie of love between us, and I must cut it for what idiots would call the tie of nature! Oh, my

darling," and he pressed kisses upon the unconscious infant's lips.

Then, as though ashamed that even that child should have witnessed such a display of emotion, he arose, led the little one to the door, and watched him as he pattered along the corridor until out of sight, then he returned to his seat, and covering his face with his hands, actually wept.

"I never loved but one other sweet creature," he sobbed, "and she was taken from me!"

The books of the institution were kept in that room. Soon the doctor took them from the shelves where they reposed, and turned to the page in which the record of the year 18—was written.

It lay before him, all plainly set forth. The apparently dead child brought to the establishment; its restoration to life, and its entrance under the regular forms of the institution.

The last record was made in blue ink. Some reason, which Dr. Rawdon had now quite forgotten, having induced him to make use of it, instead of the usual black fluid.

The doctor's mind reverted instantly to certain acids in his laboratory, which had the property of entirely obliterating blue ink, though they would have no effect whatever on black. It stuck to that subject pertinaciously.

"Confound it," said the doctor, "if that last record were away, all trouble would be over. I should keep my boy, and no one would be the wiser. It wouldn't do though. Every one knows. Wait a bit—who does know but Mills? Nobody ever talks to the paupers, and they're, for the most part, deaf and half childish. I'll bribe Mills to hold her tongue, and have my own way."

Just then a pauper shuffled past, wheezing.

The doctor opened the door.

"Request Mrs. Mills to come here," he said, and paced the room again.

Mrs. Mills made her appearance in five minutes, only waiting to put on a clean cap and set her front hair straight.

She sat down at the doctor's invitation, folded her fat arms, and put her head placidly on one side to listen.

The doctor began at once.

“Mrs. Mills, you remember, I presume, the night on which David Drew brought a child here?”

“Little trot, bless him! Yes, sir.”

“You remember the circumstances?”

“Him bein’ dead, and us fetchin’ him to life! Lor, yes, to be sure I do, sir.”

“Of course, you haven’t thought it necessary to talk on such a trivial subject to any one. Probably no one remembers the occurrence save ourselves.”

“Lor, sir!” cried Mrs. Mills, astonished. “Of course, every one in the town knows it, to say nothin’ of the poor old things down-stairs, who don’t count for much. Things ginerally goes on so stupid here that when there is a bit of gossip I makes the most on it. There’s the minister’s wife; she says how she reckons the boy’s intended for a missionary; and Miss Croaker declares he’s spared for future trouble. Mrs. Jones, that comes in with tracts now and then, and a real good, pious body, though a bit sentimental she insists he’s got good blood in him, and calls his face aristocratic; and if that’s pretty, dear knows it is; and visitin’ days, the folks come, as I say, more to see poor Trot than anything else. They give him pennies, and I keep ’em for him in a little box against he’s big. Oh, Lor, yes; I s’pose I’ve told a hundred, more or less, with my own lips, an’ they’re likely to tell others, you know.”

“Confound them, yes! Women *must* gabble. You may go, Mrs. Mills,” and the doctor fairly turned his back upon the nurse, and stalked out of the room.

“Massy sakes!” muttered Mrs. Mills; “why should the doctor be angry with me for talking about Trot—a body ud think——”

Mrs. Mills stopped short and shook her head.

“No—the doctor is a moral man. I won’t judge from appearances,” and walked away slowly to her own domain beyond the corridor.

An hour after the doctor had conquered himself, and with his mind made up to part from his favorite, sat down to write. Yet his hand trembled as he copied the words and appended a few lines, signifying his readiness to permit any further investigation necessary for the child’s iden-

tification. And he spent the rest of the morning loitering by the water's edge with a moody face, and feeling more unhappy and disturbed than he had felt for years.

CHAPTER IX.

AND A BRIEF ONE.

HARVEY GRIER had received the doctor's answer, and had addressed his unknown client thus :

SIR OR MADAM :

I have, at your request, made the necessary inquiries, and hasten to communicate to you the result. There is, at the Carltonville poor-house, a male infant, admitted at the date of which you speak, and under the circumstances which you have described. He is healthy, handsome, and of a dark complexion. There will probably be no difficulty in establishing the claim of any relatives or legal guardians upon the child, or in adopting it if any stranger should desire to do so.

Yours to command,
H. GRIER.

After waiting for some time an answer came—one so different from that which the lawyer expected that it completely puzzled him.

He sat over it in a brown study for half an hour, and then thrust it into his bosom, to the chagrin of Tom, who felt an unusual amount of curiosity, increased by the fact that this mysterious note enclosed a bank note for one thousand dollars.

After this he drew a chair to the stove, and lighting a cigar, became the original from whom Tom copied when space and leisure afforded.

He smoked and ruminated some three hours, and then started to his feet, a decided man.

"Tom, here are last week's wages for you," he said, "and you may have a holiday until next Monday. Lock up the place, put the slate outside the door, and take this to neighbor Russel."

He scribbled a few lines, assumed his hat and coat, and left the office. At six the evening train was whirling him toward Carltonville.

CHAPTER X.

SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES.

THE doctor was asked for.

“A gentleman wanted him on business of importance,” so said the old pauper, who acted as doorkeeper of the poorhouse, and Dr. Rawdon, with a sigh, said :

“Show him in.”

He knew who was coming, and recognized the visitor before the handsome man in black stood, hat in hand, before him, uttering the words,

“Dr. Rawdon, I presume? You will probably remember my name—Harvey Grier, of New York.”

“Good morning, sir! Sit down,” said the doctor.

(He could not have added, “Glad to see you,” for a kingdom, any more than he could have shaken hands with the lawyer.)

“I come upon the subject on which I have written to you,” said the lawyer.

Dr. Rawdon bowed.

“I shall, however, astonish you,” continued Mr. Grier. “The child my client seeks is not the one you have described. The circumstances are the same. There is, in that respect, an astonishing coincidence. The child my clients are in search of is, however, a female, not a male infant.”

The doctor’s heart began to beat more freely.

“Are you sure of this—quite sure?” he ejaculated. “Certain,” replied the doctor, “the missing infant is a girl!”

An involuntary sigh of relief burst from the doctor’s lips, astonishing the lawyer intensely.

“We have other children here,” he said. “You have probably mistaken the date. Our books are at your service. The records have always been kept by my own hand.

Anything I can do to aid you in your search I will with the greatest pleasure."

The lawyer was yet more surprised; the doctor's whole manner toward him had altered. He was even genial. His placid face beamed with smiles. He bustled about, and placed the records before Mr. Grier, with alacrity. He rang the bell and ordered luncheon, and treated Mr. Grier like an old friend.

The lawyer saw the change, but could not guess—how should he?—that the cause was the fond hope of keeping his little downy-haired darling for his own which animated the doctor's heart. Soon he forgot everything else in a perusal of the records.

"You say nothing is omitted. No child can have been placed here without a due record of its arrival?"

"I will swear to that if necessary," said the doctor.

"I am correct as to dates," said the lawyer; "and the boy is the only infant admitted in the year 18—, between the months of September and February."

"Yes, sir; that is the case," said the doctor. "The previous entry speaks of a girl, admitted early in September. Ann Smelt, aged five. Her mother was a washer-woman; and her father killed the poor woman with, I believe, a beer bottle. The neighbors brought the child here. A baby was admitted just before, but that was a boy, too. Tasker, No. — I forget his number, but he is three years old."

"Who assisted in the recovery of the child brought here by the watchman?" inquired the lawyer.

"Mrs. Mills, nurse in the children's department. Would you like to see her?"

"If you please."

Mrs. Mills was called.

She came this time in her best gown, and in a condition which she herself designated as "flustrated."

Mrs. Mills great ambition was to be appointed matron of some charitable institution. She never saw the approach of a stranger of business-like deportment without feeling sure that he came with the intent and purpose of engaging her services in that capacity. To-day she was not only doomed to disappointment, but to be more "flustrated" than she

had ever been before in her whole life. The lawyer (as she described it) flew at her at once. He questioned her sharply on the subject of the child's condition and recovery, of who were present, and who knew of the arrival of the supposed corpse; of who went in and out that day; of what happened. He cross-questioned her. He said sharply and without reason, "No evasion, ma'am." He frightened her and frowned at her, and shook his finger at her, all to no purpose. She told the same story without his making her contradict herself.

When he dismissed her she fled his presence as an accursed person might have fled that of the members of the Inquisition, and had hysterics in her own bedroom, sympathized with and ministered unto by another employee of the place, who declared she "knowed enough of lawyers, and prayed to be kept clear of 'em forever more!"

"She knows nothing, I think," said the lawyer. "Would it be possible for me to discover the whereabouts of David Drew, the watchman, mentioned in your record?"

"I will send for him," said Dr. Rawdon. "He lives hard by. This is somewhat mysterious, Mr. Grier."

"You are right, sir," said Mr. Grier. "And what renders it doubly so is the fact that the lost child will be a wealthy heiress. There may be motives for her concealment not possible in the case of a poor child. You will, of course, refrain from mentioning what I have just told you to any one."

The doctor assented by a bow, and led the way to the dining-room, where luncheon was prepared.

They were not interrupted in their meal, for David Drew made no haste to answer the summons. The poorhouse had been an object of terror to him ever since that awful night. It was two good hours before he came. Then he appeared, pale and anxious, and stood before the gentleman, nervously plucking the fur from a cap he wore.

Lawyer Grier tackled him at once.

"You remember a woman who met you, or whom you met on the wharf, one December night, more than a year ago?"

"I didn't meet her there," said Davy. "I found her passing a place I'd gone under for shelter from the rain and

followed her. She wanted to drown herself and her baby—I stopped her.”

He plucked the fur from his cap again, and stood looking down.

“What then?” asked Mr. Grier.

“Well, then, she walked along o’ me a bit, and asked me to hold the babby. I did it; and when she left me I don’t know, but when I looked to where she was, I found she’d cut and run.”

“What day was it?”

“The dead o’ night of a Thursday.”

“What day of the month, I mean? No evasion, sir.”

“Lord knows if I remember rightly; I couldn’t swear. ’Twas just afore I was paid; and they always pay me on the last. I reckon ’twas the 28th.”

“Where did you take the child?”

Davy plucked his fur cap harder.

“Ask the old woman that tends the door if I didn’t fetch a child here that night. Ask the doctor.”

“Then the woman must have met you twice, or you met two women on the same night, or some other. The child we look for is a girl—the one you brought here was a boy.”

“There’s been a lot o’ foundlings fetched here,” he said. “I never fetched but one. I never met but one woman down by the wharf. God keep me from meetin’ another, and them from goin’ there. The child that gal gave me to hold—the child I fetched here that night—was a boy. I’ll swear to that on my Bible anywhere.”

It was plain he spoke the truth. There could be no doubt of that; plain, also, that he was relieved—why, the lawyer could not tell. He went on.

“You know, of course, that that child came to life.”

“What child?” gasped Davy.

“That the child you brought here was not dead, only under the influence of some narcotic,” said the doctor.

“I did not know it; God knows I didn’t!” cried Davy, trembling in every limb. “Alive! Oh, no, it was dead—poisoned! I mean I’m sure it was dead!” and his face turned ashy pale, and he trembled.

“He is living, and in this house. Would you like to see him?” asked the doctor, kindly.

Davy looked at him in silence, and shook his head slowly.

“I’d rather die than see a child I brought here in the poorhouse anywhere but in its graveyard,” he gasped. “You won’t need me no more, gentlemen? Good-day,” and he walked away without another word.

“The child—the squire’s own son in the poorhouse,” he moaned, when he was in the road without. “Oh, Hepsy, it must all come out now! I can’t let this go!”

The agitation had been too great for him; he felt giddy and ill. At the first shady spot he paused, and sat down under a tree. Soon he fell over on his face, with a deep groan. It was a quiet place, and three hours passed before any one came by, then some laborers at work on a new stone house passed that way. One looked toward him.

“The old man’s been takin’ a drop,” said the first.

The other stooped over him.

“If he has he’ll niver take another,” he said. “For he’s stone dead. God help him.”

And he spoke the truth.

Dr. Rawdon, summoned to the spot by some one who gathered around, was among the first to learn the news, but he failed to connect it with David’s visit to the poorhouse. Sudden deaths were not uncommon. The doctor said, “Poor old fellow!” and heaved a sigh, rather for poor mortality in general than for David Drew in particular.

So the old watchman died and was buried, and the knowledge which had killed him remained hidden from old Hepsibah, who wept above his grave, and felt herself indeed alone in the world. She had no friends, no acquaintances, and seldom conversed with any one but black Deb; who, in her turn, was separated by her color from the white people of her own class in that Yankee town; so that through all that year the fact of the infant’s restoration to life had never come to Hepsibah’s ear.

The events of that day had proved the depth of his own feelings to Dr. Rawdon. Ere a week was over, he had, quietly as possible, taken measures to adopt the child, to the utter astonishment of the authorities of the institution, and had sent it away in charge of a stout colored woman, who appeared and departed mysteriously; and, in a fort-

night, had changed their astonishment to horror, by resigning his position, and retiring into private life.

Dr. Rawdon—the institution must perish without him !

But he went ; and a month after, Mrs. Mills, perusing a New York paper, found among the list of passengers on the steamer *Ariadne*, bound for Havana, the names of “ Dr. Norris Rawdon, nephew, and nurse.”

Mrs. Mills never put faith in human man again. The doctor had always been an exception in her mind ; henceforth she shook her head, and sagely remarked that,

“ Whatever men were on the surface, their carryings on were just the same the world over ! ” and instanced Dr. Rawdon.

CHAPTER XI.

COMING HOME.

NINETEEN years after the night on which our story opens, the house at The Pines was found, at a late hour, in an unusual state of confusion and bustle. Lights glimmered in every room, and servants and chorewomen were at work scrubbing, scouring and preparing the apartments. In the kitchen old Deborah, hardly older in appearance than on the day when we last saw her, was engaged in mysterious culinary operations, which filled her region of the establishment with fragrance, and even penetrated the upper floor, where whitewash and soapsuds reigned paramount.

Black Deborah had grown garrulous with years, and loved to talk, even to herself, as she rolled and kneaded and peeped into the great old-fashioned oven (Deborah would never listen to the idea of range or stove for baking), she kept muttering to herself:

“ Bress an’ save us ! dis yer is suffin new for us. I did tink we ud dry up an’ blow away, house an’ all, an’ libin like mice in a hole as ef we was scared o’ folks all dese years. Now we’re cl’arin’ up an’ bakin’ in de middle ob de night, and eberyting turned ober, ‘cause massa comin’ home wid a lot o’ gentlefolks. Time he come, dis nigga

tinks ; to see how dat Hepsy bringin' up his son. I neber see such a young gempleman afore. All dat Hepsy's fault ! " and Deb's head went into the oven again.

Her words told the cause of the unusual bustle. After nineteen years' absence from his home, Walter Shelbourne was about returning. That very morning a telegraphic despatch had been received announcing briefly his arrival on the morrow, and requesting that everything should be in perfect order, as he would probably be accompanied by several friends.

An old house, of which only three or four rooms had been occupied for so many years, was not easily prepared for occupation and inspection on so short notice ; but Deb and Hepsibah put their heads together and engaging (as had been ordered) new servants on the spot, called temporary assistants to their aid, and accomplished more than could be hoped in so short a time, though at midnight much remained to be done, and the laborers were expected to continue until dawn. A proof, so declared the assembled workwomen, of the thoughtlessness of "men folks who believed that housework could be done by magic."

While the bustle was going one door remained close shut, one individual of the household sat almost unconscious of the various sounds that awoke the stillness of the night.

In the old nursery fronting the garden sat a youth, still dressed as he had been for the day, with his head buried in his arms, and his frame convulsed at intervals by fits of trembling which seemed to arise from uncontrollable terror.

One hand, a little outstretched, grasped tightly a crumpled piece of paper. It was a telegraphic message received that morning from the master of "The Pines," directed to, "Mr. Harold Shelbourne, The Pines."

The hand that clutched the dispatch was white as snow, small, and with dimples at the joints. The hair which fell over the downcast face was ebon black, and glossy as any raven's wing ; the neck about which it clustered was delicate enough for that of a child. Now and then the head was lifted, then cast down again in a paroxysm of despair.

At last a rap at the door aroused him. He tossed back the disheveled locks, and crossed the room to admit the applicant. It was Hepsibah.

Twenty years had changed the old nurse woefully. Her head was quite white, and her face was covered with a net work of wrinkles ; but she was upright and vigorous—still far more so than the youth who stood before her.

Now that the face was visible, it appeared dark of hue but delicate of feature, with full, large eyes of oriental blackness, long silky lashes, a small scarlet mouth, delicately-penciled eyebrows, and a dimple in the chin. The forehead was low, but broad, the cheek suffused with a dusky mellow red—a lovely face, but not a manly one ; the boy looked only sixteen, but his real age was twenty.

“Awake yet, deary?” asked the old woman. “Why not go to bed and sleep? You’ll want to look your best and your strongest when——”

“Hush!” he cried ; “don’t, don’t ever speak of him again. Sleep! How can I sleep with to-morrow so near? How can I face him? Your sense must teach you that we cannot keep the secret. The idea is preposterous! You must have been mad to attempt it. Best tell him at once and cast ourselves upon his mercy.”

The old woman uttered a scream, suppressed almost ere it passed her lips, but awful to listen to. She fell upon her knees at Harold’s feet and clasped them with both hands.

“A little while—a little while!” she moaned. “You don’t know him. You don’t know what might be done to me. I’ve loved you, I’ve been good to you. Oh, my deary, don’t turn again your poor old nurse, and agin yourself, too. I’ll die soon ; I won’t trouble you long! Oh, have mercy!”

Harold stooped down and put both arms about the old woman’s neck.

“Don’t cry,” he said. “I love you as if you were my mother. I’d suffer anything rather than hurt you. But one glance will tell him—will tell any stranger.”

“That’s your fancy, dear,” said the old woman. “Be bold, and you’ll keep the secret yet.”

Harold answered by another trembling fit.

“Bold!” he panted ; “there is not a drop of bold blood in my nature. I am afraid of shadows ; I start at any unusual sound ; faintness steals over me at every strong emotion ; and since I learned the secret you so vainly hoped

to hide I have known no quiet moment. Oh, nurse, let us tell him! He will not punish two such defenseless creatures. He will only send us away together, and I will work for you, and we will live in peace, with no secret to hide, and I will love you and thank God that it is all over. Oh, nurse, it must be discovered at last—you know it must!”

The old woman shook her head.

“It shall not in my lifetime,” she said. “I’ve kept the secret so long, and I will yet. People never guess a secret until they have some reason for suspicion, and no human being knows this but we two. Try for old nurse’s sake; that’s a deary. And they say that master’s in poor health, and may not live long, and if he dies we can go to some far-off country, and be in no more danger, deary. You’ll find it easier to keep than you think. It’s only the first.”

Harold lifted his face with a hopeless look.

“It will be every day and hour,” he said. “How can I call him father! How can I, base impostor that I am, let him call me son? Well, let it be as you desire. Let him discover for himself without confession. My disgrace will be the greater, our punishment the heavier; but you shall not reproach me. Despite the wrong you have done me, you are the only being in the world whom I love!”

“And you will try, deary?”

“I’ll try—yes, yes, I’ll try.”

The answer came in a hopeless voice. The beautiful face turned pale, the head dropped.

“I am weary,” said Harold, “very weary. Sit down here, nurse, and let me put my head in your lap and try to sleep. Oh, if it were only for the last time, nurse!—the secret might be kept then, and I should be so much happier. Nurse, can’t you give me any of that laudanum you gave the poor baby by mistake, and let me rest forever? I don’t want to live. There is nothing for me to live for but disgrace!”

“Oh, God forbid! don’t reproach me with that murder! Don’t ask me to commit another!” moaned the old woman. “I’d rather have been torn limb from limb than do what I did. I’ve told you so often.”

“Yes, yes, I’m doing wrong; I ought not to wound you.

But my life is a wrong ; you know one placed as I am can do nothing right. My birth must have been accursed. O' nurse, nurse, this would have been hard even if I were ———"

"Hush !" plead the old woman ; "the time is so near, you must not—indeed you must not speak so !—for my sake, for my sake !"

And as she spoke she took the boy in her arms, and with his head upon her shoulder, lulled him to sleep with such a song as nurses sing to babes.

CHAPTER XII.

FATHER AND SON.

THE preparations for Mr. Shelbourne's arrival had not commenced at "The Pines" one moment too soon. Scarcely had the superannumeraries been dismissed, the new servants appointed to their places, and the household placed in readiness for the reception of its master, when the shriek of the engine, as it rattled to the depot, newly established at Carltonville, told that the train had arrived by which it was supposed Mr. Shelbourne and his companions would reach "The Pines."

The new coachmen who had been sent from New York by a friend appointed to make the selection, in company with a pair of magnificent carriage horses, had had a world of trouble with the long unused vehicles appertaining to "The Pines," but they were in available order at last, and one of them was driven to the depot to bring the expected party to the mansion in a befitting manner.

Among a pile of baggage the coachman found three gentleman—one an elderly man, with white hair and a large placid face, which seemed quite incapable of expressing any emotion, save that of superlative contentment ; the second a youth of twenty, or perhaps a year or two older, whose features were remarkably fine, and whose eyes were of a dark and brilliant hazel ; the third a gentleman of perhaps forty-eight, of commanding form, and handsome though

rather stern countenance. Standing together the two latter bore, or so the coachman fancied, a remarkable likeness to each other, particularly in height and figure.

“Thim’s relations,” said he. “T’other’s the masther.”

Thereupon he touched his hat and addressed the gentleman with white hair and placid countenance.

“Misther Shelbourne, I belave?” he said. “I’ve the honor to inform ye that I’m yere new coachman, Barney Monagan.”

“You’ve made a mistake, Barney,” said the gentleman addressed. “This gentleman is your master.”

“Thin I can’t be axin’ yer honor’s pardon for mistakin’ two such fine-lookin’ gintlemen for aich ither,” said the coachman. “My service, yer honor.”

The gentleman who had been indicated turned with a smile. He glanced at the carriage as though expecting to see it occupied, and then with a sudden change of countenance, exclaimed:

“Did no one come with you to meet me?”

“No, yer honor.”

“My son is well?”

“Parfectly well, I belave, sur, though I think I heard he was a little agitated by the news of yer comin’, an’ prepared to mate ye at home,” said Barney, repeating the words which old Hepsibah had spoken he had asked her whether “young masther wouldn’t like to ride to the depot to mate his father.”

“Agitated!” repeated Mr. Shelbourne; “one would fancy a woman had sent the message. Men should never be so agitated as to forget what is due to themselves or others. Yet there is some excuse in this case—the boy is young—scarcely past twenty; and he has absolutely never seen me. He was a babe of a year when I left for Cuba, Dr. Rawdon.”

“You may say, then, that you have never seen *him*, sir,” said the doctor. “I often wondered that you never sent for him; a child in such a consolation—such a comfort. I found my nephew so, sir, and rascal as you’ve grown to be, I shouldn’t like to part with you now—hey, Dick?” and the doctor’s hand came down lovingly on the youth’s shoulder.

"I hope not, sir," said the boy. "Your son is just my age, Mr. Shelbourne."

"Yes; and I fancy him much the same sort of fellow. You know they always said your nephew resembled me, Dr. Rawdon, and I can see the likeness myself; though, if anything, I should expect Harold to be larger, broader-shouldered, more developed. Not but that you are as much so as most young fellows, Dick, but we have always been peculiarly large and muscular in early youth. My father was, I know; and you can hardly fancy what I was before my health broke down. I am not puny now."

"We'll send for the luggage soon. It will be safe here, and I am anxious to reach home. Step in; come, Dick, I do want to see my boy. I can't delay."

So speaking they entered the carriage, and were driven toward "The Pines."

As they approached, Mr. Shelbourne looked anxiously from the window. Tender memories of the young wife who had made that home so bright for two short years, and of her early grave in the quiet church-yard, filled his heart, and made it very soft toward the unknown son, seen only when an infant, now grown to manhood.

"Shall I see his mother's face in his?" he thought. "Will there be any tone of her sweet voice in his—any token which shall tell that our love gave him life? I almost wish it were a daughter who should greet me, that I might see the mother living in her child. I could not have parted from a girl long. Great Heavens! that is the window of her room!" and he covered his eyes with his hand.

Dr. Rawdon respected his emotion, and was silent. His nephew watched the house as eagerly as its master.

The carriage turned into the pretty road before the gates, and paused with a flourish. The coachman sprang down and opened the door, and Walter Shelbourne stood within the domains of his ancestors once more.

The hall door was wide open. Within, on either side, stood the servants. Black Deb was on the doorstep, old Hepsibah a little further back; behind her stood a youth, pallid and trembling, with his eyes cast on the floor.

"Lord bress massa! come back at las!" cried Deb, ex-

tending her hand. "Ole nig glad to see him ! Ain't so much altered, massa, only a little older."

The maids courtesied, the men bobbed their little bows.

Replying to all, the master of the house still cast his eyes around looking for some one.

The two figures at the end of the hall still stood motionless—the nurse and the youth. A spell seemed to be cast upon them—they were unable to move or speak !

Mr. Shelbourne advanced toward them, and stood looking at the old woman, with something like fear in his face.

"Where is my son ?" he said.

And Hepsibah found voice to utter the words, "This is your father, Harold."

The boy lifted his dark eyes, and advanced, holding out his hand timidly, as a young child might.

In stature he was small, in form delicate. He did not look sixteen years of age.

Just now, every trace of color had vanished from his smooth, round cheek, and alarm was the prevailing expression of his delicate features.

The father could read no glad welcome home there, could feel none in the small hand, given and withdrawn in an instant. But at the moment he scarcely desired it ; astonishment, blended with mortification, filled his soul. Was this the stalwart son, the brave, gallant boy he had been dreaming of—this puny, pretty creature, who shrank from him like a frightened bird ? What glamor had been cast over a son of that house that he should have no spark of manliness about him ? They had been such brave, fine-built men—they had prided themselves on their prowess and strength—could this be his boy ? It was ; and that thought softened him. Could he be harsh to his dead wife's only child ? He deserved the disappointment—he had not fulfilled his duties as a father—he should have kept his son with him.

Again he took the small, white hand, warm and delicate, and stooping pressed his lips upon his forehead.

"God bless you, my son," he said. "We shall know each other better soon, I hope ; we have been strangers too long."

The boy lifted his dark eyes, struggled to draw his hand

away, pressed the other on his heart, and, with a low cry, fell backward into old Hepsibah's arms in a swoon.

The old woman bent over him.

"It's nothing, sir," she said. "'There, he's better now. It was the meeting with you. Come, dear, and lie down,'" and she led Harold away into an inner room, closed the door and locked it instantly.

Mr. Shelbourne turned a pale and agitated face toward his guests.

"Excuse me for neglecting you so long," he said. "This meeting has been too much for both of us," and he led the way into the long parlor, glowing with fire and sunlight, and fresh from the recent cleaning it had undergone.

"You will have dinner ready soon, I hope," he remarked to Deb, who answered :

"Yes, massa ; minute massa pleases."

"Immediately, then," said Mr. Shelbourne, and sat down with his guests before the glowing grate. His sense of the duties of hospitality was very great ; his opinion that a man should always master his emotions equally strong. Otherwise he must have revealed his disappointment and mortification to those who sat beside him. As it was a shade of restraint in his manner, a less ready flow of language, and a somewhat pale cheek, alone marked the change in his emotions ; and when at the summons to the dining-room old Hepsibah brought the tidings that Master Harold was not well enough to appear, he answered in a formal but not unkind fashion :

"Tell my son we regret his absence," and without another word betook himself to the duties of a host.

But placid Dr. Rawdon, who scarcely seemed to glance at his friend, read him through. He knew that man's soul and heart and mind. He only had understood the strong, though but newly-awakened desire to meet his son, and find in him a friend and companion. The timid, child-like boy was not what he had hoped for, and he was grieved and disappointed. Yet those gentle natures were always lovable ; he might find more than he anticipated in his son. Pondering thus, the old doctor thought to touch a tender chord in the heart of his friend.

When the meal was over, and the wine passed around, he said softly :

“Shelbourne, you told me that your wife died when this child was but a week old. I fancy the boy looks like his mother. It will be a consolation to you.”

Walter Shelbourne turned upon him with a scarlet flush upon his sallow cheek.

“No, no, Rawdon,” he said, “no ; there is not one line in that boy’s face which reminds me of his mother. He is less like her than he is like me. Would to God he had my Clara’s face—I could forgive——”

He broke off suddenly, and resumed his wonted manner.

“I would naturally be pleased to see the likeness. You can understand that, Rawdon,” and turned the conversation to another channel on the moment.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW THE GHOST APPEARED TO RICHARD RAWDON.

RICHARD RAWDON was, at all times, an early riser. On the following morning he awoke while the stars were in the sky, and dressing himself, resolved to investigate the beauties of the scenery which had appeared so lovely to him on the preceding evening. All the household were asleep, save himself, and finding the doors barred and bolted, languidly returned to his room, lifted the window, and by the aid of the grape-vine trellis gained the ground.

It was a lovely morning. Nature was just awakening. The early spring-time had covered the earth with fresh and tender verdure, and, although within doors fires were still pleasant, the outer air was far from disagreeable.

The many evergreens about the mansion had, of course, not succumbed to the touch of winter’s finger, and the other trees began to exhibit pinky leaf-buds upon their graceful boughs, while in the gray sky the moon still lingered, and the air was full of sweet country morning sounds.

Richard felt a youth’s pleasure in the freedom and loneliness of the spot and hour, and he walked on, whistling,

examining the house with a critical eye, and approving of its exterior.

The front view was good ; he passed round to inspect the back. That was almost hidden by the pine trees and a lower growth of evergreen, which covered the high wall of what he supposed must be a garden. That wall was of red brick, with a stone finish at the top, and in its midst was a little gate. The sort of gate, thought Richard, to which a lover might steal at eventide to meet his lady love, whose cruel parent might be master of those gray walls. I can see him watching for her, and fancy her opening that little gate, and peeping under the red ivy, to make sure no one else was near ; and——

Richard did not complete his picture, for just then the little gate absolutely opened, and peeping under the drooping ivy, with exactly the timorous glance he had imagined, he saw a lady. She looked about her fearfully, as though ready for retreat should she see any one without. But finding the path clear, as she supposed, for Richard had hastily concealed himself, she advanced, closing and locking the gate behind her.

She was dressed in a dark silk, daintily withheld from contact with the dewy grass by the whitest of white hands. On her head she wore a bonnet, which concealed her features to a great degree, and over her shoulders was cast a scarlet scarf.

Her movements were graceful ; her form light but rounded ; and her eyes, even from that distance, and in the shadow of her head-gear, evidently wonderfully dark and luminous.

One thing struck Richard as being decidedly strange. The lady was evidently young, as evidently beautiful, yet the garments she wore were of an antiquated fashion. The bonnet such as he had only seen in pictures ; the very scarf a relic of past years—a rich thing, quite out of date at the present day. The silk was rich and glossy, but it was short in the waist, and gored in a manner considered graceful by our grandmothers. On a less lovely form it might have excited laughter, but the delicately graceful figure which it revealed so plainly, made one forget its oddity.

The lady passed on ; turning toward a little strip of wood-

land, not far away, and Richard followed stealthily. Once among the trees, the timid step grew light, and the small head turned no more from side to side, as though dreading some intruder.

The girl tripped over the soft carpet of new grass as though her feet delighted in its touch. She wore delicate slippers, with buckles upon them, and beneath, stockings of pearl-colored silk. Oddily enough it appeared to Richard that she was absorbed in admiration of her own attire. Sitting down under a large elm tree she took off her bonnet. The hair beneath was all combed back, under the most piquante little cap of rich yellow lace, fastened by a gleaming arrow, set with diamonds; on her arms were bracelets; on her fingers jeweled rings. She was not like a lady of that day, but like one of the past.

A feeling, akin to superstition, for a moment filled Richard Rawdon's mind, and made him shiver in the morning air. The next he said:

"No ghost was ever so fresh and lovely. This is a living maiden, and a beauteous one."

He looked again. This time a change had come across the lady. She was weeping. Her bright eyes poured floods of tears down her soft cheeks. She lifted her hands and wrung them woefully.

"Oh! pity me! pity me! good angels!" she shouted aloud. "Release me from this thralldom—I have suffered enough already. Pity me! pity me! it is more than I can bear."

Again, though Richard was not superstitious, his blood curdled. He involuntarily made a movement of his arm which rustled the tangled bough behind which he stood concealed.

The lady heard the sound—she started to her feet, glanced hastily around her, replaced her bonnet, and fled with a speed that baffled all Richard's efforts to follow, unless indeed he had been willing to expose himself to observation.

Whether she re-entered the little gate he could not tell; for all he knew, the ground might have opened and swallowed her, she was altogether so phantom-like and unreal. He could almost have imagined he had been dreaming.

Wandering on toward the building, he found it still unopened.

The sun had just begun to guild the chimnies, and make the upper windows look like sheets of gold, but no smoke arose—no sound was heard, and he wandered away again, half expecting to see the mysterious lady tripping before him in her quaint and costly garments.

No such thing happened, however, and when he returned at last, weary and hungry, he found the household all awake, and the place so full of warmth and brightness, and common-place comfort, that his unexpected meeting in the gray dawn with that mysterious maiden seemed more like a dream than ever. Yet it was a dream he could not forget. It haunted him, and who can wonder? No lady was at the breakfast table as he had half expected, in explanation of the mystery. No dark eye looked at him from beneath the butterfly lappets of that strange head-dress.

Only Mr. Shelbourne, and that strange, shy son of his, and Dr. Rawdon were present.

It was a dull meal. Conversation languished. The morning interview of that father and son, as they seemed to the world, had been even less satisfactory than that of the previous night. It seemed to Mr. Shelbourne that the evident fear with which the boy regarded him could never be overcome, and that it must have birth in weakness of intellect, bordering on idiocy. For his part, Harold fancied that every moment would bring detection. Only for sake of the old nurse did he refrain from falling on his knees and confessing the truth. But she had so implored him to keep their secret, that he bore the agony in silence, learning with the passing moments the truth that Mr. Shelbourne fancied him wanting in sense, and set down the peculiar conduct that so shocked him to the fact of deficient brains alone.

Vainly did Richard endeavor to draw some words of conversation from the youth. Even monosyllables were whispered under his breath, and the manly young fellow felt considerable contempt, as well as pity, for the odd little creature at his side.

After breakfast Mr. Shelbourne proposed a ride to a certain picturesque point of view to which strangers invariably

resorted, and they sauntered out upon the porch to await the arrival of the horses at the gate—Harold shrinking into a corner, and keeping silent as before. When the four fine horses stood ready, it was observable to all that Master Harold had no intention of mounting.

Mr. Shelbourne, already in the saddle, turned half around and called to him rather sternly :

“ Harold ! ”

“ Sir,” replied the boy his face flushing scarlet.

“ Bring your hat and gloves, and come with us.”

“ I had rather stay at home, if you please,” whispered Harold.

“ I please that you shall accompany us,” said Mr. Shelbourne.

“ Indeed I’m not very well, sir.”

“ A ride will improve your health.”

“ And I know so little of riding, sir—I—I am afraid.”

“ Afraid ! ”

Mr. Shelbourne repeated the word scornfully.

“ I employed a person to instruct you some time ago. Two years since, I think ? ”

“ Yes, sir.”

“ He attended you ? ”

“ Yes, sir.”

“ Well ? ”

“ I was not able to learn, sir.”

“ Then take your first lesson now.”

Harold did not dare resist the tone of command. He crept into the house and out again, and assisted by the coachman, who remarked with a grin that “ the gentleman was getting up on the wrong side,” attained the saddle.

There he sat for a moment, his face flushed scarlet, the hand which held the reins lying nervously on his knee. Then the red turned to white. He put his hand on his heart and gave a little cry, and the horse moving a step forward, he fell helplessly to the ground.

Two persons darted from the porch as he did so. One was old Hepsibah, the other the new coachman.

“ Bring him in ! bring him in ! ” screamed the old woman. “ Here ! here ” and as the Irishman’s stout arms lifted the youth from the ground, she led the way into the little

room we have mentioned, and had the little senseless form upon a couch therein, and the door bolted between the astonished coachman and herself before the others could dismount and reach the spot.

“What does this mean?” ejaculated Mr. Shelbourne as he stood before the door.

“I don’t know, yer honor,” replied the coachman. “She pushed me out, the ould body did. I think it’s crazy she is, sir.”

“I believe you are right,” said Mr. Shelbourne. “Hepsibah, open the door.”

There was no answer.

“Unlock this door,” shouted the master of the house, and the old woman’s voice replied :

“In a moment, sir. Master Harold is better.”

“I tell you open the door.”

This time a faint voice replied :

“If you please, I had rather not. I’m not hurt much, sir.”

“Obey me, sir, or I will have the door broken down,” said Mr. Shelbourne sternly.

This time, after a slight delay, the key turned. Harold, with his hair damp with water, and pale as death, sat in a chair. The old woman, with chattering teeth and shaking hands, bent over him.

Mr. Shelbourne looked at both sternly. He spoke to Hepsibah.

“What does this idiotic conduct mean? Are you mad, both of you? Why did you fasten this door just now?”

“At my desire,” said a feeble voice from the chair.

“The young gentleman was as dead as a door nail when she slammed the door in my face,” said the coachman, “and gave no orders about it,”

“I knew it warn’t nothin’ but a faint,” pleaded Hepsibah; “and nothing keeps a body from coming to like a crowd, sir.”

“Some sense in that,” said the doctor. “But there was no crowd, and in this case bones might have been broken.”

“They might, they might,” cried Hepsibah. “Oh, they might, what would have happened then?”

"You would have regretted your strange conduct," said the doctor.

"Yes—that's what I mean, sir," said Hepsibah, with a courtesy. "I don't mean nothin' else. How could I, sir?"

"Dat ole woman is gone crazy at last," muttered Deb from the doorway.

"Mad as a March hare," assented the coachman.

"I believe this is my fault," said Mr. Shelbourne, with a little sigh. "Shut up in this lonely house for so many years, you are neither of you accountable for your actions. Could I have foreseen the consequences, I never would have entrusted my boy to that woman's charge. Doctor, Harold looks badly. You will ascertain whether he has experienced any serious injuries, I am sure."

Dr. Rawdon advanced.

"I am not much hurt and desire you not to trouble yourself about me," said the pale figure in the chair.

"But, my son, I must ascertain," began the doctor.

For the first time the little head became erect; the eyes flashed proudly.

"You will be kind enough to wait until your services are requested, and let me alone," said the little voice, in a tone that seemed to belie the whole previous conduct of Master Harold, it was so determined and so clear. "Nurse, give me your arm," and leaning on it, the lad passed into the adjoining room, and closed the door.

"My boy is not only a fool, but an insolent one," ejaculated Mr. Shelbourne, in a tone of mingled grief and indignation. "I can only apologize for him, sir."

"Apologize for a baby?" laughed the doctor, placidly. "Nonsense! I don't mind him!"

The servants had taken their departure to gossip over the recent events in the kitchen. Only his old friend was there to hear him, for Richard was on the veranda once more. Mr. Shelbourne could not restrain his emotion.

"I am very wretched, my friend," he said. "I need not conceal from you that my boy is a fearful disappointment to me. I fear he is almost an idiot, and a malicious one. I cannot win a loving look from him. He fears me as a wild little animal might. This morning I put my hand

upon his shoulder, and he shrank from me with a shiver. I find that it has been impossible to teach him one manly accomplishment; that his conduct has been in the highest degree eccentric; that he has declined the advances of all young men of his own age, and treated those who desired to show him civility with absolute insult; that while I supposed him enjoying the usual advantages of his condition in life, he has remained shut up with old Hepsibah, hardly speaking to any one else; that he cries and has hysterics, like a girl; that—— But you have seen him and witnessed his conduct. Can you wonder at my shame and mortification? What shall I do? Is there any help, any remedy, Rawdon?"

"There's one," said the doctor, shrugging his shoulders. "You can make the best of it. What is can't be helped. It's nature or circumstance, or both together. You may find the boy affectionate at last. I don't deny he's odd and puny, but he is pretty. If he were your daughter instead of your son I should say very pretty, and his eyes are not those of a fool—nor his head, Shelbourne. And do you know I liked him better when he forbade me to touch him than before. There was a spark of spirit, Shelbourne. I'd be kind to him, and take pains with him, and keep him with me, if I were you, and I'd not fret over it. The worst thing a man can do is to fret. It does no good, and may do harm, you know."

"Ah, you hardly know what trouble is, Rawdon," said Mr. Shelbourne.

"No?" asked the doctor. "Well, I thought I did once; but that's thirty odd years ago. I've got pretty well over it. I'll tell you the story some day, perhaps. Shall we have our ride? The young fellow is not injured; take my word for it."

So the fourth horse was led away to the stable, and only three rode out together from the gate of "The Pines" that day.

CHAPTER XIV.

A MYSTERIOUS VISITOR.

THE streets of Carltonville into which the three equestrians rode were unusually busy on that day. Quite an excitement prevailed in that quiet place, where posters were almost unknown, by the appearance of a colored boy with paste brush, and an armful of handbills, which he was proceeding to post on every available blank wall, tree stump, or barn-side. Women stood at their doors, and boys followed in the wake of the bill-poster with gaping mouths and eyes wide open with astonishment.

The three gentlemen reined in their horses, and Mr. Shelbourne called to one of the urchins :

“What is it, my lad—a circus or a menagerie?”

“It’s a reward, squire,” said the boy; “some un is lost.”

“S’cuse me, sah,” said the bill-poster. “It’s a young lady. Please accept one. You, too, gemplemun,” and with a bow he distributed the bills and strutted away, followed by the rabble.

“What is it all about? Read it, Dick,” said the doctor. “I haven’t got my glasses.”

And Richard, unfolding the bill, read aloud :

“Five thousand dollars reward for information of a young lady abandoned on the 3d day of December, 18—, when an infant. If now living is nearly twenty years of age, with dark eyes and dark complexion. Has upon her left arm a red mark like a star. Wore when lost a garment so peculiar as to be at once identified if preserved.

“Five thousand dollars reward for the Cuban heiress, D. J. W., or one thousand dollars for sufficient proof of her death.

“Address, Anxiety, Box —, New York Post-Office.”

The doctor started and turned pale.

“Confound it! it brings back old times,” he muttered,

“There was a search for that child nineteen years ago, when I was resident physician at the poorhouse yonder—that very child. It must be the same one. They told me she was an immense heiress—the richest in all Cuba. There were odd circumstances about the affair. Have they been searching all the while, or is this a revival of the old story on the approach of the majority of the Cuban heiress? I say, Dick, find her and pay court to her, and when she’s your wife produce her and demand your fortune, eh?”

The doctor laughed as though to cover some stronger feeling, and riding closer to Dick dropped one hand upon his shoulder.

“When an old fellow is a bachelor and has no son,” he said, “it’s a good thing to have a nephew. I don’t know what I’d do without Dick, Shelbourne.”

Dick returned the doctor’s glance with one equally affectionate, and Shelbourne sighed.

“I envy you,” he said. “I dare never expect either companionship or affection from my poor child!” and his tone was so unhappy that the party rode on in silence for some time.

At last, on the very outskirts of the village, appeared a large white building, surrounded by an old-fashioned garden, and Dr. Rawdon paused with an exclamation.

“Fairfield House!” he cried. “Why, Fairfield and I were college chums together. I wonder whether I should find him there? Have you any objections to stopping, Shelbourne?”

“None whatever,” said Mr. Shelbourne. “I knew Dr. Fairfield well. He was one of the surgeons who attended my wife in her last illness. Had his advice been followed I might still, perhaps, have had her with me and my child had not been motherless.”

“I fear the interview will be painful,” said the doctor.

“No,” replied Shelbourne; “I have become inured to pain I remember always, but I can remember more sadly at one time than another. I should rather like to shake hands with Dr. Fairfield.”

Accordingly, the three rode to the gate, tied their horses to the trees without, and walked up the smooth rolled gravel path.

The bell upon the door glittered like gold in the noonday sun ; the porch was whiter than snow ; everything was immaculately clean and spotless, like a new toy-house. It was pleasant to look upon, as were the flower beds, where already the golden crocus and the purple violet were in bloom, and everything gave promise of abundant bloom and blossom.

A peal of the bell brought to the door an elderly servant woman, with her sleeves tucked up, who greeted them with an injured glance, and hoped in an "aside" that they had "rubbed their feet and not mucked up the porch as soon as it was scrubbed ;" and afterward condescended to answer their inquiries.

"Master ain't in," she said. "He's gone to New York, and missus is gone with him. Miss Jones, the doctor's niece, is to be married, and they've went. Master Alfred is going to-morrow, but he's here now, if you'd like to see him."

"I should like to see the child," said Dr. Rawdon ; and the woman, with a giggle, flung the door open, and cried : "Master Alfred, please come here a minute."

For answer, some one came clattering and wheeling down the stairs and along the hall, where, seeing strangers, he came to a pause suddenly with a "Beg your pardon ; I thought there was no one here but Margery. Good morning, gentlemen."

"Child !" squealed the servant. "There's the child for ye ! Child ! He, he, he !"

The doctor slowly put on his spectacles.

"I might have known twenty years would make you a man," he said ; "I forgot at the moment. You're like your father, Alfred ; and though you can't remember sitting on my knee, I suppose, you may have heard him speak of his old friend Rawdon."

"Dr. Rawdon !" cried the young man ; "often and often ! Come in ! I am so glad to see you, and your friend. Father will regret his absence. Will you stay here in Carltonville ? Have you come home for good ?" and the lively youth conducted his guests into a small back parlor, where the cheerful fire, still welcome in-doors, glittered in a polished grate.

There he placed seats for them, rang for refreshments, and played the host to admiration.

Richard was fascinated with him, and when at last they arose to depart, was easily persuaded to remain behind.

"I'm all alone here," said Alfred, "and, Dr. Rawdon, if you'll lend me your nephew for to-day and a night, I shall be extremely obliged to you, and will endeavor to make him enjoy himself."

"Dick is his own master," said the doctor, and his nephew answered, "I shall be pleased to remain, Mr. Fairfield."

"Alfred, you mean. I like first names," said the young man. "And, doctor, my father will, I know, be overjoyed at your return. Good-by. Good-by, Mr. Shelbourne. Happy to have met you."

The elder men rode away, and after giving orders respecting Richard's horse, Alfred returned to the parlor.

"Mr. Shelbourne is a fine-looking man," said he, as he sat down. "Have you known him long?"

"We were together a great deal on our voyage home, and we are at present visiting at his house," replied Richard.

"Then you must know his cub of a son," said Alfred. "Upon my word I never saw such a queer little creature—impertinent, too. Out of pity more than anything else I tried to make his acquaintance. At first he would not see me. Said he was sick, and apologized. At last I caught him in the garden. He blushed and said, 'No, sir,' and 'Yes, sir,' like a child; and when I invited him he fairly told me he wouldn't come—'regretted it was impossible,' were the words. He has treated every one else in the same way, and Tom Brown—you must know Tom—he, a bright, good-hearted fellow, called there one day, and took quite a notion to the little soul. He's so pretty, he says, and talking with him he put his hand on his shoulder (one of Tom's ways), and the little shrimp edged off. 'I'd rather not be touched, I'm nervous,' he said. Tom declares he felt as though he had kissed a girl. How does he use you?"

"I cannot make him familiar; and he even seems to dislike his own father," said Richard. "I fear his brain is affected."

“That may be,” said Alfred. “It’s the only excuse for him. He must make it uncomfortable there for you.”

“I see so little of him that I almost forget his existence,” said Richard. “But we leave The Pines soon. My uncle is looking for a residence in Carltonville. He desires to remain here. You like Mr. Shelbourne, don’t you?”

“He is grave and too haughty, I think, but—yes, I like him.”

“And I,” said Richard, “am not sure that I do not esteem him more than any other living being, save my uncle. I always find him kind. Our tastes are congenial. He takes an interest in my pursuits. It grieves me very much to know that there is no mutual affection between his son and himself. Were I his son I should love him dearly.”

“Now that I look at you,” said Alfred, “you are very much like him. Have you ever been told that?”

“Often.”

“And not the least like your uncle. Yes, Margery” (for at this instant the good woman appeared at the door, beckoning), “dinner is ready, I suppose.”

“I thought I’d get it early,” said Margery. “Young folks get hungry sooner than old uns. There’s chicken pot-pie, and such a puddin’ as ’ud do yer heart good. Young folks likes puddin’.”

“No matter for the bill of fare,” said Alfred. “Rawdon, I’ll show you the way.”

And they went together into the dining-room, where a table, set for two, displayed a host of savory dishes, to which they did ample justice, and to the chocolate which followed.

The young surgeon and Richard Rawdon sat together over the fire in the pretty back parlor that night, enjoying each other’s society all the more (as young men will), that there were no older persons present.

Richard had much to tell of his life abroad which was new to the other, and Alfred, in his turn, had a way of repeating the history of college tricks and jokes quite as interesting to Richard.

Ever and anon peals of silvery laughter filled the room, and time passed rapidly.

At last, Alfred said :

“Do you smoke, Dick?”

“I am very fond of a cigar.”

“Cigar! Oh, I mean a meerschaum,” said Alfred. “You don’t know its superiority. The placid happiness of coloring a meerschaum cannot be described, but must be experienced to be understood. I advise you to learn at once. The governor objects, as fathers always do; but, bless you, he smokes himself, so he cannot say much. For to-night I have some choice Havanas at your service, however.”

Thus speaking, Alfred arose, and left the room for a moment. He had just returned with his smoking apparatus, when the office bell rang suddenly and loudly. The shuffling of slip-shod feet was heard in the hall, and in a moment a head in a handkerchief appeared at the door. It was the old servant-woman’s.

“Some one wants ye, Master Alfred. Lor’! them’s smokin’ in the parlor, with their nasty feet on the fender, as I scoured this morning!”

(This last in a stage aside.)

“I’ll be there in a moment,” said Alfred.

Margery retired, with a doleful glance at the fender, from which Dick removed his feet at once.

“I’m sorry; I must apologize,” he said.

“If you don’t put them on again we’ll quarrel!” said Alfred. “Mother and father both humor Mag too much; she’s growing saucy. Sit still, old fellow, and be comfortable until I return. Would you like to look at *Punch*—there’s a volume of him. I’ll be back soon,” and rising, with that jaunty step peculiar to him, the young surgeon passed into the adjoining room.

Did you ever see a door which was treacherous, inasmuch as when you fancied it closed it sprang open again with a click? Such a door divided the back parlor from the office. As Alfred closed it, it clung for a moment to its place, and then started back, leaving an aperture some inches wide, through which the murmur of voices came distinctly to Richard Rawdon’s ear.

It was evident to him that if it remained thus he might unintentionally overhear a conversation not intended for a third party, and with the true instinct of a gentleman he arose to reclose the door.

The back parlor crossed the hall, consequently the door, which was in the middle of the room where Richard remained, was in the corner of that into which Alfred had passed, and through the narrow opening a full view of the front office could be commanded.

For the instant in which Richard would have stood before it had he fulfilled his intention it was impossible that he should not see what passed within. That sight arrested his arm, and riveted him spell-bound to the floor. Not only listening, but watching! It was dishonorable—it was absurd. So he said, so he felt; but he had no more power to move than some people have under the influence of sudden fear. Such, for instance, as the presence of a mysterious “something white” at their bedside at midnight will occasion.

This young surgeon stood upright in the middle of the room, astonishment depicted in every feature. Before him, upon an ottoman, was seated a lady—a young and beautiful lady, with jet-black hair, dressed in the garb of years gone by. A hood and mantle flung back upon the seat she occupied, and her dark ringlets imprisoned beneath a quaint, round cap of old yellow lace. In a word, the lady whom Richard Rawdon had seen in the woods on that never-to-be-forgotten morning.

“Am I dreaming?” thought the lad. “This, surely, cannot be true!”

On her right arm the lady wore a bracelet, of gold and pearls, but about her left was bound a handkerchief, stained through and through with blood. This she extended toward Alfred.

“I have hurt myself,” she said. “Will you dress the wound at once?”

And Alfred, in a voice, scarcely like his own, replied:

“Let me see the arm, madam,” and took a seat at her side. “It is a singular wound,” he said. “May I ask how——”

The lady interrupted him.

"No," she said ; " that does not matter. Do what you can, and state your fee. I am in great haste."

The young surgeon arose, crossed the room, took from a cabinet such things as he needed, and returned.

For ten minutes thereafter the dressing of the wounded arm proceeded in silence. Still Richard Rawdon stood transfixed ; still he felt it utterly impossible to close the door or return to his seat.

When the last touch was given the lady arose, resumed her hood and mantle, laid a gold piece upon the table, and turned toward the door.

Alfred Fairfield started to his feet.

" Permit me to summon your carriage or your servant," he said.

" I have neither," replied the lady

" Your friend, then," said Alfred.

" I came quite alone."

" Alone ! and it is midnight !" said the young surgeon. " Then, madam, I must beg permission to accompany you to your residence. I cannot allow a lady to leave my house unprotected at such an hour."

" I neither need nor desire such courtesy," said the lady. " You will most oblige me by leaving me to return alone as I came."

" But you are ill ; even now there is fever in your veins. Your wound should have been attended to hours ago. Besides, forgive me, you are too young, too beautiful to expose yourself thus to impertinence. I *must* see that no harm comes to you !"

The lady burst into a low, eldritch laugh.

" I fear nothing," she said. " What have I to fear ? And listen. I see in your eye that you purpose to follow me—that you hope to fathom the mystery which surrounds me. You may spare your pains. Ere to-morrow's dawn you may search the town without finding me, though I shall be there. You may brush against me in the street and not see me ; you may, it is possible, enter a room with me and be unconscious of the fact of my presence. Leaving this room, I vanish utterly and forever from your sight. If you speak of me, if you think of me, let it be as of a ghost."

With a motion as supple and sudden as that of a kitten, she was gone. The door had opened and closed behind her, and Alfred Fairfield was alone.

For one instant the young surgeon stood staring at the panels of the door, through which the mysterious visitor seemed almost to have vanished. The next he seized his hat, and hastily followed.

With his departure, Richard Rawdon cast off the spell which bound him to the spot, and returning to the fire-side sat down before it, wondering at the strange scene he had witnessed, and awaiting Alfred Fairfield's return.

CHAPTER XV.

A VOW.

ALFRED FAIRFIELD returned in something less than half an hour. Richard heard him enter the office, and fling himself into a chair, with a heavy sigh, as though out of breath or wearied.

He refrained, with a great effort, from intruding upon him, and waited, not patiently, but with an outward semblance of quietude.

At last the young surgeon came into the parlor, and took the seat he had vacated. He was very pale, and remained utterly silent for many moments. At last he spoke.

"Pardon me for having deserted you so long. It was unavoidable. Something so singular has occurred since I left this room that I find it impossible to believe that I am not the victim of hallucination. I must tell you. I——"

Richard put his hand upon his arm.

"Before you speak," he said, "I have also a revelation to make. I have acted the part of an eavesdropper. I overheard your conversation. Believe me, it is not my custom so to forget myself. I did not believe myself capable of so ungentlemanly an act——"

"Say no more, Dick," interposed Alfred. "Doubtless I alone am to blame; I left the door ajar."

“Yes,” said Richard, “and I arose to close it, but when I unavoidably occupied a position which enabled me to see that singular and beautiful creature, for more reasons than one I was overcome with astonishment. A spell seemed upon me; I could neither move nor speak; I could only stand motionless, with my eyes upon that glorious face.”

“No wonder,” said Alfred. “Her beauty is almost superhuman. Such wondrous eyes; such scarlet lips; and that singular dress—those deep brocades; those jewels, set as none are now; and that bodice, under which the bosom rose and fell! Rawdon, I am not sure this was a woman whom we saw! It was like a vision! Yet I should be mad to think so, as I touched her; I felt the silken softness of her skin; her breath fanned my cheek; I saw her color come and go. She was a woman—a living, breathing, loving woman! Yet she has vanished like a spirit, and I shall see her no more. Beautiful, mysterious creature, whom it is impossible that once having seen I should ever forget!”

Richard Rawdon’s cheek flushed; his eyes burnt. He grasped the arm of his companion once more, and looked into his eyes.

“Listen,” he said; “I have seen that lady before.”

“You? Who is she—what is she?”

“I do not know.”

“Yet you know her.”

“No; I have only *seen* her—and but once.”

“Where?”

“In the garden of The Pines, before sunrise.”

Then, as one tells a dream, Richard repeated the story of his strange discovery. He told how this exquisitely lovely creature, in the costume of the past, had emerged from the little postern gate of the building. He revealed, in fact, all that he had seen or thought, though not all that he had felt.

Alfred listened eagerly.

“When I followed her,” said he, “she fluttered before me in the moonlight, as a frightened fawn flies from her pursuers. I kept in sight, myself unseen. Past the scattered houses, along the wall of the stone church, right through the graveyard, where I half expected to see her open a tomb and step in, she looked so like the portrait of

some one's great-grandmother when a child. On over fields and commons by a short cut to the very gates of The Pines. There I lost her—at The Pines, Rawdon, where you first met her."

"Alfred, you bewilder me."

"The same thought has, then, struck you, Richard? You feel she must be an inmate of The Pines."

"Impossible!"

"How can you be sure?"

"I have inquired of every one in the house if any lady resides there, and been laughed at for my pains."

"Bah! Servants are paid to keep the secret. This lady is some favorite of the master."

"No, Fairfield; could you know Mr. Shelbourne, so grave and cold and upright, a man beyond suspicion, you would never harbor such a fancy."

"Well, you know best. Perhaps the secret is the son's."

"Harold's? That poor, puny boy's?"

"Harold is as old as you are; we know his age. His absolute avoidance of all without The Pines proves that it possesses some uncommon attraction. That silly old nurse would keep any secret for him. He has been all his life sole master of The Pines, and it is great rambling building, only half occupied. Be sure this girl dwells there for love of Harold."

"And you think that lovely creature depraved. Her face is angelic. Oh! you wrong her."

"Ah, Richard," said Alfred, "you are younger than I. Beautiful women are not always good, nor weak-minded men innocent. Yet, until I heard your story I did not doubt her. Hear the confession of my trust in her. She so moved me that, looking at her, I said, 'If she be no man's wife, I will learn who she is, woo and marry her.'"

Richard started, and turned pale as death.

"Listen, Alfred Fairfield," he cried; "I, who do not doubt her, but who believe her the purest maiden on whose brow the virgin moonbeams shine to-night—I have taken the same vow."

They stood together, those young men, in utter silence—motionless as statues, their eyes fixed on one another. The ticking of the clock upon the mantel, hitherto unno-

ticed, suddenly filled the room. Unconsciously they both listened to the sound. As they did so there came from its brassy throat a whirr, then twelve strokes dropped into the silence. They broke the spell.

"Midnight," said Alfred Fairfield, in his deep, musical tone. "A fitting time for a solemn compact. Will you make one?"

"Speak," said Richard.

They moved, and looked no longer like two young gentlemen of the nineteenth century; they felt such no longer. To their romantic hearts the by-gone days of chivalry had returned. Their eyes gleamed, their cheeks burnt. Their positions were statuesque. Two knights stood there, ready for any deed of love or daring.

"Speak," said Richard, "I am listening."

"My friend," said Alfred, "for the first time you have learnt what men mean by love. For the first time, I, also, have had my heart touched as I never dreamt it could be touched by mortal woman, and the same girl has thus moved us both. I believe her unworthy of this emotion. I fear we must cast this fancy from our souls as we would a scorpion from our bosoms. You, on the contrary, place implicit trust in this lovely creature. Now for the compact. Together, as friends and brothers, we will find this girl and learn who and what she is. If she is what I fear, we will never see her more. But finding her pure as she is lovely, we must adore her, and ours will be the task to shield her from harm, to protect her from danger, and to disarm her enemies or persecutors. We shall love her, consequently we shall be rivals. But, Richard, shall even love unclasp the golden bonds of friendship? Shall a woman part us? Heaven forbid! In any event we must be friends and brothers forever. Your hand upon it, Richard."

"Friends forever!" said the other; and in that still midnight hour their hands were clasped, and like two young knights they vowed to be the redressers of wrong, the champions of beauty, and brothers until death.

Then Alfred Fairfield filled two goblets with red wine. They lifted and touched them.

"Friends!" said Alfred.

“Forever!” echoed Richard, and when the same was quaffed, the glasses crashed together in diamond fragments on the floor, never to be profaned by another draught.

At any other hour these young men would have considered the parts they played in the romantic scene impossible. Then it appeared natural, and not the least absurd.

We have all experienced the witching power of midnight; we have all felt it no strange thing to say or do—nay, to feel and think under the influence of the white moon as we never could while the red sun was in the sky. At breakfast-time the world is not the world of the past midnight.

The witchery of the past hour was still upon them when they said “good night;” and many a long hour each watched the stars through the white curtains of their chamber windows ere sleep veiled their eyes.

CHAPTER XVI.

A DISCOVERY.

DAYLIGHT and old Margery aroused them. Each almost feared to meet the other as the remembrance of the past night dawned upon them, and the younger of the two blushed like a wild rose as he grasped his friend's hand in the long hall where they met.

The courtesies of the table and the desultory conversation occupied the breakfast hour, and neither found courage to speak of the romantic vow of the previous night. Perhaps they might have parted without alluding to it but for an event which caused the mystery which hung about the fair incognito to deepen.

Breakfast was just over, when there came from the hall a howl—it can be called nothing else—which rang through the room and caused both young men to start to their feet in terror. Alfred's coffee cup dropped from his hand, drenching the snowy cloth with the amber fluid, and Richard started up with a vague intention of doing something and assisting somebody.

Just then the door burst wide open, and old Margery, wringing her hands and rolling up her eyes, tottered in and sank breathless into a chair. Both young men ran toward her.

"My poor Margery," cried Alfred. "What is the matter?"

"Oh, what will missus say?" cried Margery. "There's been misfortunes afore, but none like this 'ere. O Lord! Bear up, Master Alfred, dear, I can't abear to tell ye!"

"My father! has anything happened to him?" asked Alfred.

"No, not adzackly in the ways o' life and health, but his property! Oh, the wretches! the incendiaries!"

"Is the house on fire? What does the old lady mean? Do speak, Margery! What shall we do?"

"You can't do nothin'; it's pasted tight; the varnish'll all come with it, it will! Oh, can't you lynch 'em, Master Alfy?"

"Margery, explain!"

"I ain't got breath, I ain't! Oh, they've——"

"Well, well!"

"Oh, they've pasted a nasty, filthy show-bill on our new painted front door! It's them pesky boys o' the Parker's, I know. There's no mischief they hain't up to. On Mr. Fairfield's front door, and all the neighbors grinning!"

"I expected to hear of murder, arson, or burglary," said Alfred. "Thank Heaven, it is nothing worse."

Margery arose in wrath.

"Come look at your front door," she said, "and then thank Heaven if you are wicked enough!"

With suppressed merriment in their countenances the young men followed her to the door. There, upon the glistening snow of the door paint, some vandal had pasted a great sheet of white paper on which, in characters of inky blackness, appeared the words "\$5,000 Reward!"

In fact it was the advertisement for the lost Cuban heiress, which Richard had read that morning, and of which a copy still remained in his pocket.

As Alfred read this his color changed, and he suddenly seized Richard Rawdon's arm and drew him back into the parlor.

“We have made a discovery,” he said. “You read that poster?”

“Yes; I have even a duplicate in my pocket. They are pasted throughout the village.”

“Richard, you remember that beautiful girl?”

“Remember her? Oh, Alfred!”

“Her features were those of a Cuban.”

“Yes, yes. But what——”

“You noticed the passage which alludes to the crimson star on her arm. Richard, that arm, that beautiful wounded arm I bound up last night, had just above the elbow a red star, rose red and distinct as though drawn by a pencil.”

“Alfred, you are dreaming.”

“I swear that mark was there. There is a fate in this, Richard.”

“Can you be right?”

“Richard, I can scarcely believe my own senses, but listen. I could stake everything I hold dear upon the truth of my suspicions. The lady this speaks of and our lovely incognito are one. This beautiful creature who has come and vanished like a vision is either a visitant from the other world or this long lost Cuban heiress. Remember our vow. A mystery surrounds her. She may need friends.”

Again those young hands clasped, and they stood together in silence.

A few moments after, the lad who had been preparing Richard's horse announced him ready. For the present they must part. Alfred accompanied him to the outer gate.

“This seems like parting with a brother,” he said. “Is it possible we have known each other but twenty-four hours?”

Richard vaulted into the saddle.

“*Au revoir*,” he said. “We will not say adieu.”

“*Au revoir*,” was the answer. “*Au revoir*, and remember.”

It was the watchword of two knights errant.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE DOCTOR SEES THE GHOST.

RICHARD clattered up to the door of The Pines and dismounted thereat with the firm expectation of a warm and smiling greeting from the two elder men. On the contrary, when he entered the old dining-room he found them seated at a late breakfast, with countenances which betokened plainly that something unpleasant had occurred. Mr. Shelbourne wore a haughty and unusually stern expression, and the doctor looked both angry and disconcerted.

“There must have been a quarrel,” thought Richard, but prudently forebore to notice the singular change by either look or word, and seated himself at the farther end of the long table, to which the waiter brought coffee and other refreshments, with a merry remark and a laugh, which, though not as natural, was seemingly as gay as usual.

Still the countenances of the two friends did not relax, and their answers were mere monosyllables; and as Richard watched the face of Mr. Shelbourne he saw it grow pale with suppressed anger and, it might be, inward pain, and at the same moment Dr. Rawdon flushed scarlet from cheek to chin.

Suddenly the former spoke.

“Doctor, this must be investigated. I see no sign of insanity in you; I have no reason to believe you subject to moments of hallucination. As a gentleman, I, of course, feel sure you would not exaggerate or invent in such a case. Let me beg you to repeat your statement, word for word.”

“Great Heavens! Shelbourne, you speak as though you were cross-examining some witness who had perjured himself. You don’t know it, perhaps, but your tone is almost insulting. ‘Insane,’ ‘exaggerate,’ ‘invent!’ I really feel angrier than I have felt before for forty years.

Sir, I have told you what I saw and heard. Believe me or not, as you choose."

"Dr. Rawdon," said Mr. Shelbourne, coldly, "you misunderstand me. I do not desire to cross-examine you, but to inquire into the facts connected with what you have seen. Of course the idea of a 'ghost' is put aside entirely. Either you were the victim of an optical delusion or you saw a woman in the corridor last night. Doubtless the first is the case; if not, there is treachery under my very roof."

"I was broad awake," said the doctor; "I saw and felt as I do now. You desire me to repeat the story. I will, and with more minute detail. Richard shall hear me. See the poor boy, wondering what two old fools are talking about! Dick, your uncle has lived to inform you with his own lips that he has seen the wraith of——"

"For Heaven's sake, not even in jest," interrupted Mr. Shelbourne. "You agitate and anger me more than you can guess. You have seen some living woman. Perhaps old Deb or Hepsibah."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the doctor; "black old Deb! wrinkled Hepsibah! Why, it was a girl; the loveliest creature you ever saw. Now listen, Dick, and remember, I'm not crazy, but in my right mind. You must stick to that, or I can't make a will in your favor, my lad."

"Last night I laid awake a long while, I don't know why, thinking of all sorts of things, dreaming as I might have done had I been asleep. My night-lamp was burning dimly, but the moonlight fell across the floor, making it bright as day. I was comfortable. No young bird lying in a nest of down ever had a more luxurious time of it. I was not conjuring up ghostly images, upon my word I was not, but suddenly I heard, as it seemed, a sharp whisper:

"'You can't keep me; I will go.'"

"Then a rustle and a struggle. I started out of bed, hardly knowing what to think, and made for my door. I had left it a little ajar by accident. In the semi-darkness my foot struck a chair and made a loud noise. Then all was still. The struggles and whispers were over. When I opened my door I saw nothing."

"'Could it be fancy?' said I; but at that moment I

heard a faint whisk, as of a woman's skirt. It came from the end of the corridor, which takes a sudden turn below my door; and stepping forward I saw, by the bright moonlight, a woman standing at the stair-head window. She was small and slight, and wrapped in a hood and cloak. But even the tint of her dress was visible. It was scarlet; and at her throat some jewels glittered. I don't know much about dress, but I fancied she looked like the girls I used to see when I was a small child, rather than the ladies of to-day. She moved, too, with a gliding, ghost-like step; and, as she went down the stairs, I heard the sweep of her dress, or of her spectral feet. Heaven knows which! I felt nervous, I don't deny that; but, I said, I'll follow, be she woman or spectre. So on I went, keeping where, if she had mortal eyes, she could not see me. From the corridor to the hall, and from that to the small door which I heard you say had not been opened for years. Shelbourne, as I live, that figure either opened that door or passed through it. I saw a gleam of light; but, the next moment, my hand was on the lock, and it was fast; my whole strength could not stir it! Shelbourne, Dick, now comes the horrible fact! When I removed my hand it was wet with some clammy moisture. An instinct told me what it was. I went back to my room and examined my fingers by the light of the lamp; they were red with blood!"

Mr. Shelbourne looked at Richard with an expression which plainly denoted the most complete incredulity and no little indignation.

But Richard's eyes met his with a glance which said plainly as words can speak:

"I believe this entirely."

The doctor noticed both glances and laughed.

"Ha, ha!" he cried. "Make Dick believe his old uncle has taken leave of his senses, if you can! And, upon my word, though you might think me mad, I don't see why you should be offended. Landed proprietors are often proud of a family ghost!"

"This is too bad, doctor," said Mr. Shelbourne. "You should be too much of a gentleman to repeat the idle gossip of domestics, when you must guess how deep a pang

the thought of such a rumor, insane though it be, without foundation, as common sense must teach us that it is, must give me."

"Upon my word, I do not understand you, Shelbourne," said the doctor. "To what gossip do you allude? What rumor are you thinking of?"

"You have never heard the story the servants have been telling each other for the last month?" asked Mr. Shelbourne.

"Certainly not."

"You do not know why the gardener, after a few weeks' service, begged a character and dismissal?"

"No; I fancied you found the man incompetent."

"You tell me this on your honor?"

"On my honor, as a gentleman, Shelbourne."

"Forgive me, then," said the other, extending his hand. "I might have known you better. It is a painful subject to me. What I have suffered for the few weeks past I cannot tell you. You know, and you also, Richard, my dear boy, that this son of mine has made my heart ache, that he hates me and shames me, that all hope of the happiness the poorest father has in his most witless son is denied me. But this other torment you know nothing of. You shall. You are my friends. God knows I have reason to cling to friendship since love is denied me. I adored my wife; she was my idol; therefore, perhaps, I lost her. She died, clinging to life, longing to live for her babe's sake and for mine. She died, too, under peculiar circumstances. You knew them, Rawdon; and she left behind her a child who needed a mother's care, if ever infant did. I neglected my trust. Coward that I was, I fled the mansion haunted by her presence, left my son to grow up what he is. I am to blame; and, surely, if spirits ever could return to haunt a wretched, guilty recreant, hers might arise to ask for an account of these long years which I have spent mourning for her, not cherishing our child. You cannot tell how horribly the thought smote me when I first heard the idle tale, which you shall hear from other lips than mine."

He rang the bell as he spoke, and bade the servant who answered it send the cook to him.

Ten minutes elapsed before black Deb answered the summons. But during that time not one word was spoken. Mr. Shelbourne paced the room, with his eyes upon the floor, and the others waited wonderingly.

At last Deb entered. She had donned a clean turban, of all the colors of the rainbow, and an apron white as snow, and made her appearance with an apologetic speech.

"Must 'scuse me, massa. Deb was beatin' eggs; and eggs must be beat jus' long 'nuff, else nuffin won't be light; an' laws, den massa couldn't tech the puddin'. Fus' duty ob de cook is de dinner. Massa knows dat."

"Sit down, Deb," said Mr. Shelbourne; "I want to talk to you."

"Tank ye, massa," said Deb, assuming a chair. "Berry much 'bliged. Old bones like to rest, black or white."

Another pause ensued. It was broken by Mr. Shelbourne.

"You remember what you told me the other day when Sampson McPherson asked his dismissal?"

"Laws, yes, massa."

"I want you to repeat that story to these gentlemen."

"Laws, sah, seems to me massa tole ole Deb nebber menshun him."

"I did. I repeat the order, but to-day I desire to hear the story again. These gentlemen have heard the ridiculous statement, in some form or other, and I wish them to know what it is about. I will leave you with them, and henceforth let no friend of mine who respects me, nor any servant who desires to keep her place, allude to the subject."

So speaking, Shelbourne arose and left the apartment.

The doctor waited until the retreating footsteps had died away, and then said:

"What is it, Deborah? What story is Mr. Shelbourne talking about?"

"'Taint no story; nuffin but de berry bressed truf, sah."

"Well, what is it?"

"Oh, it's missus."

"Who?"

“Missus dat walks: Massa Shelbourne’s wife’s ghos, sah! Eberybody knows dat. Ole Deb has dese tree years. An’ laws, says I, she won’t hurt no one. She was too good and too gentle—jus’ the sweetest lady ole Deb eber see. Come back to look arter poor Massa Harol, what ole Hepsy has spoiled wid her absurd bringin’ up. Dat’s de larfin stock ob de place. But, bress ye, dey’s all skeared; and McPherson, he cut an’ run. Fuss time eber she seen her, dis nig tremble.”

“When was that?” asked the doctor.

“One night, massa,” said Deb. “I wanted to knit some stockin’s, and I remembered de yarn was all up in de garret. Tinks I, I’ll fotch um down an’ wind um. So up I goes. Dat garret is an awful skeery place, any way. Big as all out dores, an’ de candle didn’t light only a little piece. One end dere’s trunks, an’ chists, and two ward-robes, full ob de dead ladies’ tings—missus’ an ole missuses’. My yarn was toder end, near de dore, in a basket; an’ I was fotchin’ up a hank, when de moon shines out in decorner ob de garret, where missus’ trunk stand, an’ I sees a lady! Nebber saw nobody look so white. She was dressed in silk, an’ shined all ober wid rings and pins. Missus was good sperit, no mistake. I knowed her in a minit by her gown. Laws, I’d hooked de real one many a-time.

“‘Oh, missus,’ says I, ‘can’t ole Deb do nuffin for ye?’

“An’ she made no answer, but jus’ looked at me an’ sunk down, an’ I didn’t see nothin’ more, for de moon went down under de cloud, an’ my candle tumble ober, an’ I flewed to de stairs, an’ mussy it was I didn’t break my neck de way I fell down ’em. Warn’t no one in de house den but ole Hepsy, an’ I tole her. She laughed an’ says, ‘Niggers is all fools, an’ believes in spooks.’ I don’t, bress you dough. She was as white as yer handkerchief dat minit.

“Sence massa come back, good many has seen her. Sampson, he says she ’peared in de garden, pickin’ roses, an dere ain’t one ’ud go up in de garret for a month’s wages.”

The doctor looked at Richard triumphantly, and taking a silver quarter from his pocket, held it toward the old negress.

“Thank you for your story, Deb,” he said; “and mind, don’t say anything more about it. It is disagreeable to your master, and no wonder. Besides, it may be no ghost after all.”

“It’s missus’ sperit,” said Deb; “but nebber fear, massa, I’ll hold my tongue. Deb won’t say nuffin to nobody, not if dey pays her. Tank ye, massa, much oblige,” and, with a courtesy, Deb hobbled away to the kitchen, where, through the day, she wore a sphinx-like air of mystery, which astonished her fellow-servants.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN ACCIDENT.

THE next week Dr. Rawdon and his nephew took possession of a pretty cottage *ornee*, one of a row near the river side, and with much rejoicing began their bachelor house-keeping.

Old Fairfield and his son were among the most frequent guests, and Mr. Shelbourne, as much at home as at The Pines. Harold never entered the doors, and Mr. Shelbourne, after endeavoring to persuade and command him, resigned the effort in despair. His only solace was the society of Richard, of whom he grew extremely fond.

Alfred and Richard often talked of the mysterious lady, but no solution of the mystery offered itself. The parties continued to advertise the loss of the Cuban heiress, and a young lawyer’s clerk remained at the little hotel, who had come down for the avowed purpose of attending to the matter; but to all appearances there was nothing to attend to.

Thus spring and summer departed, and golden autumn came, crowning the earth with harvests. In this, the sportsman’s best season, the gentlemen of the cottage and The Pines spent the best part of their time in the golden-tinted woods, with guns and game-bags; and on these expeditions Harold was always taken, greatly against his will and little to the satisfaction of others. Yet there seemed to be some sense in the idea of familiarizing the lad with

manly sports, and perhaps Mr. Shelbourne was less cruel than he seemed. He desired his son to carry firearms, and instructed him in their use, but Harold invariably screamed at every report, and no earthly power could conquer his timidity. The doctor good-naturedly remonstrated in vain.

“My son shall cease to be a coward, if it is in my power to bring that result about,” he said. “A Shelbourne of his nature never disgraced our name.”

“One scene,” however, ended this effort to instill a love of sportsmanship into poor Harold’s cowardly breast, and came very near removing Richard from this weary world before he was ready to quit it.

The party had been in pursuit of game with little success, and were returning through some tangled wood-paths, when Harold’s gun, awkwardly carried, caught in a long gnarled branch, and in his efforts to disentangle it, it slipped from his hand and at the same moment went off, and the contents entered Richard’s shoulder.

At once all was confusion. The wounded youth, leaning on Mr. Shelbourne’s shoulder, grew paler every instant. The doctor anxiously endeavored to staunch the blood which stained his sleeve, and Harold sank on his knees in agony of grief.

“Oh, my poor, poor Richard! my poor Richard! I have done it! I! I! Oh, see his poor blood! I have killed him? It is your fault—yours! You made me carry that horrible gun! Oh, Richard, look at me! speak to me!” and with angry glances at Mr. Shelbourne and heart-broken ones at Richard, Harold kissed the hand of the wounded youth again and again, and sobbed like a very child.

Even in his alarm for Richard, Mr. Shelbourne found time to reprove the poor boy.

“Be a man, Harold,” he said. “This would disgrace a girl. At least do not express yourself before strangers. See, a crowd is gathering. There, leave us—go home.”

“I cannot leave him!” sobbed Harold; “I dare not! Oh, if he should die! Doctor, tell me he will not die!”

“No, no, my boy, no danger,” said the doctor, and Richard endeavored to comfort the lad by a smile, but in the very act lost consciousness.

“He is dead !” screamed Harold ; “quite dead ! And I have murdered him !” and improved matters by fainting also, to Mr. Shelbourne’s intense indignation.

Richard’s wound, though not dangerous, was severe, and as The Pines was nearer than the doctor’s cottage, thither they bore him, and laid him tenderly upon a couch, where the doctor extracted a ball and made him as comfortable as possible ; after which old Hepsy was appointed to the position of nurse, and Harold, with pale cheeks and burning eyes, crouched down out of sight behind the bed and remained there until all the rest had left the room. Then he crept out and sat down by Hepsibah’s knee, with his curly head upon her lap.

Richard lay, to all appearances, sound asleep, but though his eyes were closed he did not actually slumber. His mind was active, though his body was weak and inert. He heard the movement, and then a low, soft sobbing, and a sound of the old nurse’s voice as though she were soothing an infant.

“Hush, my darling, hush ! It wasn’t your fault, and he’ll be well in a week, deary.”

“You are sure, nurse ? Oh, when I saw his dear blood flow and his red cheek turn pale, I thought I should die ! Oh, I would die to save him were he in danger ! Ah, see how still he is ! Let me stay by him. I’ll be careful. No one will be as careful as I ; no one !”

“No harm in that, child ; you shall.”

“He is always kind to me, nurse. The only one besides you. Ah ! I cannot bear this life long ; it is too weary. Only for your sake, dear nurse, I would kill myself. I hate that cruel old man !”

“Hush, hush ! you’ll awake him and harm him !”

“Ah, I’ll be still ; very still. Dear nurse, go and lie down, and I’ll watch. I’ll never stir, or speak, or doze, and if he moves I’ll call you. Please ! I can be quiet if it is for him.”

Old Hepsibah arose slowly.

“I’ll do it,” she said, “since your heart is set on it ; but don’t let me sleep until morning, and remember the cool drink if he wakes up,” and the floor creaked under

her heavy step, and the door closed, and Harold was the only watcher in the sick-room.

Silent as any mouse he sat for many minutes. Then Richard felt him draw near and bend over him. One instant a light breath fanned his cheek, and a soft hand nestled in his curls. The next, two lips touched his in a kiss which was too gentle to have awakened a slumbering infant.

“Oh! God guard and heal him!” prayed a soft, sweet voice, “and let me not have the sorrow harm to him would bring.”

Richard opened his eyes.

“Harold, dear boy, I am not asleep,” he said, and stretched his wounded arm toward him; but with a slight exclamation the form which bent above his pillow receded, and though he spoke again, it was in vain: the strange boy was gone.

Five minutes after Hepsibah resumed her seat, and Richard saw no more of Harold for many hours.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE LADY APPEARS ONCE MORE.

DURING that period of Richard's convalescence there came an afternoon in which he was comparatively deserted. Mr. Shelbourne had pressing business in the city of New York, and Dr. Rawdon accompanied him. Two of the servants had begged leave of absence, and old Hepsibah had an attack of rheumatism which confined her to her own room. So that until night Richard was to remain at The Pines with no companion but Harold, who counted for nobody. True, he could summon any of the servants by touching the bell, and was able to lounge upon the sofa or walk about the room; but with the touchiness of a convalescent he felt extremely injured, and positively sulked two mortal hours before the consolation of reading occurred to him.

“I'll find a book,” he thought; “they might have brought me a few,” and sauntered out into the library.

The door was locked, and Richard felt doubly injured, but remembering a window on the piazza, went out into the garden and endeavored to storm the fortress by that means. It was not a difficult task. The French window was raised easily and softly, and withdrawing the soft muslin curtain he stepped in. It was an octagon-shaped room, with oak panels and rows of shelves on two sides. On the third was the window opening on the piazza, a quaintly-carved desk of black walnut, and a niche in which a bust of Washington was placed. On the fourth another long window looking out upon a splendid prospect of hill and valley, and nodding grain-fields, with a glimpse of blue waters in the distance, and a narrow door which opened upon a staircase which led to the upper floor.

Richard's eye glanced over the apartment, and rested amazed upon one object. Alone in the library sat a lady richly and strangely clad; a book upon her knee, her small right hand carelessly furling the pages she had ceased to read, her left buried in her bright black hair, which clustered from under the edges of a lace cap of an old-fashioned shape. So might some dame of the olden time have placed herself before the artist who was to hand her charms down to prosperity. Yet it was evident she did not suspect herself observed by any eye. The grace was natural, the pose instinctive, and her mind was far away beyond the dim old library. It might be even beyond that sky now glittering with the last golden kiss of the declining sun.

Richard watched her. No other face resembled that. This was the lady of the garden, the wounded beauty of the office, or a vision. One moment he hesitated, then advanced and stood before her.

As his shadow crossed the floor the lady started up, with terror in her eyes.

"Ah, I am lost!" she cried: then sinking slowly to her knees she clasped her hands and sobbed, "Oh, be generous! do not betray me! Keep my secret—if not for my sake, for that of one who would die were my presence here betrayed too soon. You are kind, you are good. Do not betray me."

Richard listened, enraptured, to the gentle, pleading voice.

“Betray you?” he said. “Ah, lady, you see before you no enemy, but one who would gladly serve and aid you. If the secret you desire to keep is your presence here believe me, I will not reveal that presence to a living mortal. And if in aught I can be found your friend, trust in me as in a brother.”

The dark eyes rested on him in surprise, and the lady murmured to herself, “He suspects nothing.” Then she said to him:

“Have you ever seen me before?”

“Yes, madame.”

“Where?”

“In the garden at sunrise, and in Dr. Fairfield’s office at midnight.”

“Nowhere else; at no other time?”

“Never to my knowledge.”

A smile spread over the girl’s face. She glanced toward the mirror and downward at her rich and elegant attire.

“Never to your knowledge?” she repeated. “Ah, well, tell me what you know of me. Sit here; you are ill yet, and weak; you have been suffering from a cruel wound, Mr. Rawdon,” and she pointed to a low ottoman at her side.

“You know my name, I see,” said the youth in surprise.

The girl smiled merrily, and a row of snowy teeth flashed upon him.

“Come,” she said, “I asked you what you knew of me?”

“I have known, or believe that I knew, of your residence at The Pines for several months,” said Richard.

“And what more!”

“Nothing.”

“Absolutely nothing?”

“No,” said Richard. “I also know that you are the most beautiful and most mysterious of all living beings. I know that since I first beheld you I have dreamt and thought of you, sleeping or waking, and that, having spoken to you, I cannot let you vanish, but must know more of you.”

“He knows nothing,” she says again. “The secret is

more easily kept than I supposed. How pale you look ! ” she went on more loudly, but still in a soft murmur. “ Do you suffer ? ”

“ No ; I am quite well : only weak from close confinement. ”

“ You will hardly take that cowardly little wretch to the woods with you again. ”

“ What little wretch ? ”

“ Harold Shelbourne, a miserable poltroon, who has no more manhood in him than a child’s puppet. He shot you, did he not ? ”

“ By accident, poor boy. ”

“ Ah, you pity him ? ”

“ I do. ”

“ The creature does not deserve it. ”

“ He is good and gentle, and I think cruelly used, ” said Richard. “ Surely a woman should have pity on him. ”

“ Why ? because he is so very like a woman ? ”

“ Because the women’s hearts are tender. ”

“ Ah, well, he has few friends. Thank you for being kind to him. ”

Richard looked at her. Alfred’s suspicions recurred to him. He said suddenly :

“ Madame, I have promised to reveal your presence to no one. May I ask a few questions which may guide me in the preservation of your secret ? ”

“ Surely. If I choose I will answer them. ”

Richard’s cheeks flushed. The words seemed a rebuke.

“ From whom am I to keep this secret ? ” he said.

“ From every one. ”

“ Yet others know of your presence here ? ”

“ One other. ”

“ That one ? ”

“ I cannot tell you. ”

“ I can answer myself. It is Harold Shelbourne. ”

“ He knows, ” murmured the girl. “ Yes, he knows all. ”

A pang of jealousy wrung the youth’s heart. He spoke a little bitterly.

“Yes, madame, I believe I know. Harold Shelbourne is a happy fellow, since it is for his sake that you remain here.”

“He knows nothing yet,” repeated the lady once more.

“Am I not right?”

“No, for his sake I should fly from the hated place: I do him a bitter wrong in staying here.”

Again the jealous pang smote Richard’s heart.

“You fear to bring his father’s anger upon him,” he said.

She laughed wearily.

“It falls heavily upon him now,” she said. “Mr. Shelbourne hates the little wretch. And who can wonder? He is a manly son to be proud of—a stalwart fellow! Ha! ha! ha! Oh, I despise him very bitterly myself. Yet he is not to blame.”

Richard looked at her astonished. Her cheeks were scarlet and her great dark eyes filled with tears. Her young heart softened, and she read his emotions in his ardent eyes, for, turning toward him, she gave him both her hands.

“Be my friend,” she said; “Oh! be my friend! I need one very much. You who are kind even to poor, contemptible Harold, will be good to a helpless girl. I wish I could tell you all, but I cannot; only this: without my will or knowledge I was brought here. It was a wrong to me and a greater wrong to others. But, being here, I stay for the sake of my worst enemy, whom I love better than any being on the face of the broad earth. Oh! I see you wonder in your eyes. I am a mystery even to myself. Here I must remain for that one’s sake until death or discovery releases me. In the end discovery will be inevitable, and you will hear strange things of me; but you will know also that I have been the victim of the strangest spell ever woven about living mortal. You will perhaps despise me, but you will also pity me.”

Richard pressed both small hands to his lips.

“Let me help you also,” he said.

“No one can help me,” she said, “no one; no one. Yet I may need a friend some day, and you will help me

then, I know. See how low the sun is sinking. They will return soon. You must leave me now."

"But I must see you again."

"Yes; I should not say so, but I cannot deny myself; yes, yes. Ah, let me go."

But Richard kept her hand.

"One question," he pleaded, "only one. Is it for love of Harold Shelbourne that you remain here? Is he the one who wronged you, yet for whose sake you suffer?"

"No," replied the girl. "I not only say no, but I swear it by all I hold most sacred."

"Is it for——"

"I answer no more questions," she replied, haughtily.

"But where shall we meet?"

"In the garden some moonlight night. Is that enough?"

"No. What night? when?"

But she only smiled and glided from the room up the small staircase which led to the upper floor.

For a moment Richard lingered, then bent his steps in the same direction, but corridor and staircase were empty, and through all the house could be found no trace of that fair lady's presence. Whither she had flown it was impossible to discover or imagine.

Now that he had spoken to her, now that, despite the warnings of his more experienced friend, he believed this exquisitely lovely creature to be good as she was lovely, the chains were riveted too closely about Richard's heart to be broken by any ordinary circumstance.

The smoldering fire had flashed into a blaze, the first love of a boy was born full grown.

"She has asked me to be her friend," he said. "She trusts me. She has promised to call on me in time of trouble or danger. My life shall be hers. My strength, my energies shall be spent in her service, and at last I will win her. Yes, she shall be mine; for whoever or whatever she is, I would trust that angel face, that seraph voice, despite a million traducers."

Yet Alfred Fairfield perhaps would not believe without proof. He might utter doubts, insulting to her and offen-

sive to him ; or believing, might win her heart, and leave him to despair.

Friends ! Ah, yes, we are more than friends," he whispered. "Alfred Fairfield is the brother of my soul. But I must keep her secret, and I must win her if I can."

Yes, it was a solemn promise. He dared not betray her, and even that was part of his compact with Alfred. Had they not vowed to be her knights and champions ?

Thus he sat wondering, when Mr. Shelbourne and the doctor returned. The first words of the former were :

"Where is Harold ?"

Richard shrugged his shoulders.

"I cannot inform you, not having seen him since your departure," he said.

Mr. Shelbourne's face flushed.

"Has my son so little of the gentleman about him as to leave a guest alone all day ?" he said. "I bade him do his duty as a host before I left. I blush for the boy."

"No matter, no matter," said the good-natured doctor. "Dick did very well, no doubt ; don't expect too much of your lad."

Mr. Shelbourne paced the room.

"Doctor," he said, "this farce is too absurd. That boy and I cannot live together. There is aversion in his every glance. And I feel as a father should never feel to his son. I try to think of him as the child my wife left to my care ; but I cannot. Her nature was noble—she came of a proud and brave race. She would have blushed for him as I do. I am resolved at last. I shall take measures to place Harold under the care of some gentleman of learning and piety and arrange my affairs so that in the event of my decease, he will find himself and his estates properly cared for. And leave this place forever, forgetting that I have a son, or that the home of my forefathers still lifts its head above the earth."

With these words, and a glance of mingled bitterness and sorrow, he strode from the room, and did not reappear for several hours.

CHAPTER XX.

A PLAN FOR HAROLD, AND HOW IT ENDED.

MR. SHELBOURNE was a man who wasted few words on anything. Having once spoken of his determination to place Harold under the care of some learned man, or at some foreign college, he never mentioned it again, until, one bright morning, when seated in his library with the doctor and Richard, he suddenly rang the bell, and requested the servant to summon Master Harold immediately. The boy came at once, wearing that air of perplexity and terror which always seemed to fall upon him in his father's presence, and seating himself at the other side of the table, hung his head and awaited the communication which Mr. Shelbourne seemed about to make on some important subject. Never before had the boy's timid mien so angered that stern man. It required a mighty effort on his part to restrain some outburst of indignation. For a few moments he bit his lips and clenched his teeth; but at last forced himself to speak with a dignified degree of calmness.

"Harold, you and I have known very little of each other. It is partly my own fault. I should not have abandoned you to strangers for so many years. But since my return I have been greatly grieved, and much offended by your conduct. Your whole deportment has been such as to make me blush for you. You exhibit neither respect nor affection for me. You have neglected every manly accomplishment I have endeavored to instruct or have you instructed in. Without disguise, it is evident we are mutually disagreeable to each other, therefore, it is, in my opinion, best that we henceforth live apart. It grieves me to say so. Does it grieve you to hear it, my son?"

"No." Nothing more—that short, coldly-uttered monosyllable, "No."

"You agree to what I have said?"

"Yes, sir."

“We are best apart.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Then let me inform you that my friend, the Rev. Alwyn North, has agreed to take you under his care, and that I shall leave the country at once for Europe. You will have a liberal allowance, and every advantage of instruction, by which, I hope, you will profit.”

“Thank you, sir.”

“We shall probably never meet again.”

“No, sir.”

“You will be ready to-morrow at noon. Mrs. North, who is at present on a visit a few miles from this place, will kindly stop that you may travel home with her. As you appear to entertain some affection for your old nurse, you may pass the intervening time with her. I shall pension her, and she will reside elsewhere, so that probably you will very seldom see her, if indeed ever.”

“Hepsibah—do you mean Hepsibah?” cried Harold.

“Of course.”

“I cannot part from poor old nurse,” said the boy. “Oh you are very, very cruel,” and bending down his head he wept.

“You have rendered this alteration necessary,” said Mr. Shelbourne.

“I? Oh, it will kill her. It will kill her. I will obey—I will do anything, but don’t take her from me.”

“Enough of this,” said Mr. Shelbourne; “you may go.”

He opened the door, and Harold passed through it sobbing.

Ten minutes after, old Hepsibah burst into the room, and fell at Mr. Shelbourne’s feet.

“Don’t take my deary from me,” she sobbed. “I’m very old; I can’t live long. Oh, please leave my deary with me or I shall die.”

Mr. Shelbourne looked upon the tear-stained and wrinkled face with some emotion.

“I am glad my wretched son has inspired feelings of affection in any one’s heart,” he said. “I am equally glad that he appears to return that sentiment in at least one instance. Yet, my good woman, this must be done, and I

greatly fear that your influence over him has been far from beneficial. You have made no effort to cure him of his absurd timidity; you encourage him in his odd habits. To use a common expression, you have spoiled him, and for his own good you must part. Perhaps counteracting influence may make him other than he is. Though I greatly fear it is too late to hope."

Sorrow was never written more deeply on any brow than on that of Mr. Shelbourne's as he uttered those words.

Richard's heart throbbed with compassion.

"Would that I were his son," he said, "that I might prove to him how strong filial affection may be. He deserves affection. He is worthy of respect."

So strong were his emotions that he advanced closely to the side of the sad, stern man, and took his hand. The mute token of sympathy met with no repulse. Proud as he was to others, Mr. Shelbourne was always gentle as the humblest man to Richard. He looked up at him with a weary smile, and repeated what he had often before said and thought.

"You are a happy man, Rawdon."

Day drew to a close, sombre shadows replaced the glorious halo of sunset, and amidst them the crescent moon arose.

A peaceful silence rested upon "The Pines," and the whole village seemed to repose.

Now and then the far-off notes of some simple musical instrument floated upon the air, or the whistle of a plowman returning homeward pointed the silence with its sharp, shrill notes, but nothing ruder fell upon the ear.

On the verandah sat the gentleman of the house and his guests. The doctor lazily recounting some old college joke, and the others listening, as all three puffed away at the most fragrant of cigars.

Richard's mind was in truth wandering, not only from the present scene, but from the merry tale. He was thinking of the lovely lady, and of her yet unfulfilled promise of a second meeting, and dreaming, as boys dream, of their first love.

Now that Mr. Shelbourne had resolved to leave America,

perhaps forever, he found no difficulty in prevailing on Dr. Rawdon and Richard to remain at "The Pines" until his departure.

Harold was to be sent away on the morrow, and soon the old place would be deserted or sold to strangers, so, at least, all three believed that night.

The first token of the breaking up came to them unexpectedly in the form of old Hepsibah, who stood with a small bundle in her hand, and an antiquated black bonnet crowning her cap-boarder, so suddenly before them, that she might have risen from the ground.

"I've come to bid you good-by, sir," she said. "I might as well get it over. I shall take the evening train for New York, where I have friends. It's hard leaving a place I've been in so long, but since it must be it must be."

"My good woman," said Mr. Shelbourne, "this haste is unnecessary—entirely unnecessary. I do not intend to turn you penniless upon the world; I shall provide for you liberally. Remain until the last. I should grieve to think of anything else. It is your right, for you have been faithful to me and affectionate to my boy."

Old Hepsibah shuddered.

"I've done little but harm to you or yours," she said. "I know it, and repent it, and I can't stay. I'll let you know where I am when I fetch my things, sir; but I must be quick now or I'll lose the train. God bless you, sir, and try and forgive me, as you need forgiveness from God yourself. Good-by, sir; good-by, gentlemen." And in a determined way, which made interference quite impossible, she left the porch, and trudged away in the moonlight, leaving the group upon the porch to discuss her singular conduct.

"As well so, perhaps," said Mr. Shelbourne. "We shall avoid a scene when Harold goes. Poor old woman, I have made her wretched. It is part of my fate. I think God must look angrily upon me, Rawdon. He has afflicted me sorely."

At this moment the sound of carriage wheels was heard, and, to the surprise of all, a vehicle drove to the gate and stopped, and the driver descending, handed out a lady.

"It is the hotel carriage," said Dr. Rawdon; "and

that is Dick Duncan, or I'm no guesser ; but who can the lady be ? ”

“ The lady, if I am not mistaken, is Mrs. North,” said Mr. Shelbourne, and, arising, advanced to meet her.

“ Mrs. North, I believe.”

“ Yes, Mr. Shelbourne. You scarcely expected me at such an hour.”

“ Nevertheless, I am a happy to receive you.”

“ I have been suddenly called home by the illness of my father,” said Mrs. North, “ and must travel with all haste ; but, having promised to call for your son, and understanding that his extreme timidity and nervousness renders it undesirable that he should travel alone, I have stopped at this unseasonable hour. The young gentleman can, perhaps accompany me, and his trunks can be forwarded to-morrow or at any appointed time.”

“ You are very kind, Mrs. North,” said Mrs. Shelbourne. “ My son can be ready immediately. You will find him sadly in need of a mother's care and counsel ; sadly deficient in every mental and physical quality. But, I trust, you will make every allowance for him ; and though I cannot expect you to feel that interest in him which brilliant qualities would awaken, I know you will be gentle with him. Thus far, his only affectionate impulses have been toward an old woman, his nurse from infancy. Perhaps another woman, and one in every way so admirable as Mrs. North, may have more influence over him than I. I have done wrong, perhaps ; I have not, it may be, understood him. I confide to you the task I am incapable of filling.”

“ I will be a mother to the poor boy,” said the lady. “ I assure you I already pity him ; and, my dear sir, trust in God—He may shed light upon the poor lad's mind, and make him all you wish.”

Mr. Shelbourne bowed, and rose to ring the bell.

“ You will take some refreshment, Mrs North,” he said.

“ No, sir ; I have just eaten heartily, thank you.”

“ A glass of wine, then. Samuel, the sherry ; and request Master Harold to prepare instantly to accompany Mrs. North.”

The servant left the room.

Ten minutes after he returned with the wine and glasses on a silver salver. Ten minutes more elapsed, still no sign of Harold.

Mrs. North grew anxious.

"I grieve to hurry Master Harold," she said, "but the time is passing, and I must leave by the evening train."

Again Mr. Shelbourne rang the bell. This time old Deborah replied.

"Tell Master Harold that his father desires his presence instantly," said he.

Deb grinned.

"Mass Harol knows dat good enough," she said.

"Why does he not come, then?"

"Says he won't, mars."

"Won't?"

"Yes, sah; won't go to-night, he says."

"Does he know Mrs. North is kind enough to trouble and incommode herself on his account?"

"Guess so, mars."

"This is unbearable," said Mr. Shelbourne. "Order him instantly——"

Here Mrs. North interposed.

"As the young gentleman is to be placed under my care, I presume it will not be improper for me to attempt to influence him in this matter," she said. "Young persons of feeble mind are amenable to kindness, and I have some experience. Where is Master Harold?"

"In the drawing-room, mum, lying on the sofy, sulking," said Deb.

"Show me the way. I'd rather go alone, Mr. Shelbourne."

And Mrs. North followed black Deb.

Once in the hall that functionary revealed a long row of glistening ivory, and shook her high-capped head.

"My 'pinion is he's more a debble dan a fool, missus," she said.

"Bless me! Don't use such language!" said the clergyman's wife. "'Devil' is profane, and 'fool' forbidden. So you think his temper is at fault?"

"Knows it, missus," said Deb. "Smart as steel trap—don't tell ole nig; only 'terminated to be cantankerous."

Missus gwine to hab her hands full," and she opened the door of the drawing-room.

Mrs. North took the lamp and entered.

For a few moments Deb heard a murmur of voices, then shrill exclamations of horror, and Mrs. North swept out with a face flushed scarlet and eyes sparkling with indignation.

"Show me the way from this den of iniquity," she said. "I am disgraced to have entered it. That creature; that sinful creature! Gracious goodness! what is the world coming to?"

"What de matter, missus?" asked Deb.

"Have they deceived you? I shouldn't wonder, poor old black soul! But they thought to cheat me. They might have known me better. There, show me the way. Why did I ever cross the threshold."

She brushed past Deb, even as she spoke the words, and made her way toward the door opening on the porch, and would have glided past the three gentlemen but that Mr. Shelbourne stopped her.

"Mrs. North, what has happened?"

"I have discovered your deception, sir!" and she turned an angry face toward him. "Let me go! This roof smothers me! Oh, shame, shame, sir, shame!"

"Mrs. North, I pray you to explain yourself. Has anything been done to offend you?"

"To offend me? Oh, Mr. Shelbourne, you ask me that—you who have endeavored to introduce an abandoned creature into the home of innocence and decency—the home where my pure daughters dwell, and where I, an honest matron, have lived uprightly so many years; the home where the servant of God is master! Shame, sir, shame!"

"My mirerable son!" groaned Mr. Shelbourne. "In pity tell me—what has the wretched boy done or said. Has he insulted you—has he?"

Mrs. North turned upon him with flashing eyes.

"Your son!" she repeated, with a bitter sneer. "That farce has ended. Its motive is incomprehensible to me. It was as shallow as sinful. Your son! Give the creature some other name. Your son! Hypocrite!" and she

swept from the porch, and entering the carriage cried to the driver, "As fast as you can to the depot," and was gone.

"What does this mean!" cried Mr. Shelbourne, as the astonished gentlemen stared at each other. "Has Harold exhibited some trait of which I never suspected him, or is Mrs. North mad."

The doctor shook his head.

"Incomprehensible! incomprehensible!" he said. "I'd see the lad and find out. I say, Dick, what's the matter?"

Dick was staring with wide open eyes at a patch of moonlight which illuminated a spot of the garden, just beyond the deep shadows of a laburnum.

"Nothing," said Dick; "it was fancy, I suppose."

"What was fancy?" asked the doctor.

But Richard would not satisfy him. The truth was that a moment before he had seen a female figure, hooded and shawled, standing in that patch of light, waving a white kerchief with a gesture that seemed to say "Farewell."

The outline of the form was not to be mistaken. It was the mysterious lady of "The Pines."

Something whispered to him that she had left that place forever; that then and there they parted. For a brief moment he sat quite still, overwhelmed by the thought; the next dashed into the garden. But neither among the tangled bushes, nor wandering where the roses bedewed the air with fragrance, nor down by the blue water side, could he find sign or token of the mysterious maiden, or of any other living soul.

CHAPTER XXI.

A LOST HEIR AS WELL AS A LOST HEIRESS.

By the time he had returned from his fruitless search the whole house was in commotion. Lights danced in every room, and every one beneath the roof was searching for Master Harold, who was nowhere to be found. He had

positively been in the drawing-room when Mrs. North entered. Sam, the waiter, declared that he had seen him leave the apartment and enter his own room, but that was the last known of him.

At first it had been supposed that, having offended Mrs. North, he feared his father's anger, and had secreted himself; but now grave fears were entertained for his safety.

The servants were full of horrible fancies.

"He's murdered for his gold watch," said Sam.

"He's drowned, poor lamb. They'd ought ter a watched him better," said cook.

"He's a hangin'," blubbered the housemaid. "I knowed he'd be druv to it."

"We shall find him all blood somewheres," said Sam.

"What do you think, Mr. Coachman?"

"It's my belafe he's cut and run," said Barney.

The last surmise, as the most original, was communicated to Mr. Shelbourne. He summoned the coachman to his side at once.

"So you think Master Harold has run away?" he said.

"Yis, yer honor."

"And why?"

"Well," said Barney, scratching his head, "it's hard accounting for the ways o' them innocents. Ye see he likely wanted liberty; them does as can't use it invariable. I'd be looking at the depot; they know him most likely; anyway, yez can describe him. He's not in the house, that's sartin."

"He may be right," said Mr. Shelbourne. "Barney, saddle a horse; and I know you will go with me, Dick. Another for this young gentleman. Doctor, I know you will remain here and do what you can if that unhappy son of mine returns. Of all things keep him from leaving the house if you find him secreted about it. I am tender on the subject of an open exposure of his imbecility and want of filial affection."

"Yes, yes," said the doctor. "But I think Barney is right; Harold has run away, poor fellow. He was afraid of the reverend gentleman."

Mr. Shelbourne paced the piazza in great agitation, and Richard watched him with sympathetic glances.

Soon the horses came to the gate, and the two mounted and galloped off toward the depot, which they reached in half an hour.

There they found the office quite empty of passengers, and a tall gentleman reading the newspaper, with his hat on, and an air of being at ease, while a porter in a red shirt smoked a short pipe beside the door.

To him Mr. Shelbourne addressed himself.

"Is the evening train for New York in yet?"

"Half an hour ago, sir," said the porter.

"Had it many passengers to take up here?"

"No, sir; only three. Wait a bit, four; three women folks and one man."

"Can you describe the man?"

"No, sir. Lost anything? Burglar p'raps, sir?"

"No. I am anxious about some one."

"P'raps Mr. Brush can tell you. Walk in, sir."

Into the office Mr. Shelbourne walked at once, followed by Richard. At his entrance the official arose and bowed.

"Good evening, squire. Hope you didn't mean to go down in the train. You're too late if you did."

"No, sir, I did not. But I have important reasons for desiring to know who were taken up here."

"Have, hey? Well, squire, I'll tell you. Jest four. Three of them waited here a spell, and one come in a hurry at the very nick o' time. Fust place, that old nurse from your house, Mrs. what's her name?"

"Yes," said Mr. Shelbourne. "Go on."

"Next a tall lady in black, came in the hotel carriage; blue eyes, fair hair, and a kind of better than you be air."

"Mrs. North. Well, sir?"

"Then a little hunchbacked gentleman—walks with a cane. Good little soul—Pratt's uncle. Leave him something when he dies."

"Yes, sir. Well, the fourth?"

"The prettiest girl I ever saw."

"A girl! And there was no one else?"

"No; not a soul. I'd take my oath to *that*. But I vow, I never saw such a beauty. Dressed somehow odd, too; and in an awful pucker."

“What did she look like?” asked Richard, in a low voice.

“Nothing I ever saw,” said the man. “Dark as a gipsy, with such eyes, and a rich silk dress, under a common hood and shawl. You never saw such a beauty, sir.”

“We are wasting time, Dick,” said Mr. Shelbourne. “I am obliged to you, sir. Come, my boy, Harold was not on the train.”

“One moment,” pleaded Dick. “Pray, had the lady any baggage with her?”

“A small bundle,” said the man.

“How did she come?”

“On foot, by herself.”

“And she had dark eyes and hair?”

“Like ink.”

“And a pretty figure.”

“Angelic. I say, sir, you seem to know her.”

“Come, Dick, come!” cried Mr. Shelbourne, already in the saddle.

“Yes, sir,” answered Dick. “Only an instant more. I *do* know her, I believe. Tell me about her.”

“She was frightened, and had been crying. Her dress was fine, and her outside things like a servant’s. And another queer thing—when she was stepping into the car, something caught her shawl and pulled it off. I picked it up, but not before I had seen that the dress she wore was not that which ladies wear to travel in. It was made low in the neck and short in the sleeves, like a ball dress, and would have stood alone, it was so rich. She had the plumpest neck and arms, and on one of ’em, jest above the elbow, a mark as big as a quarter, rose red, and the shape of a star.”

“It is she; I do know her,” cried Richard, in a great state of excitement. “I would give the world to follow her.”

“Have to wait until morning!” said the man, with a grin.

“Richard!” called Mr. Shelbourne, and the bewildered boy obeyed.

He was right. She it was who had waved her kerchief to him in the garden. The mysterious lady had left “The

Pines ; " and where was Harold ? Had they gone together ? Was her fate actually twined with his ? Was Alfred right ? No, no, no, anything but that. And yet, how probable it seemed.

Tho only explanation of her presence—the only explanation of her departure, was that her life was in some way linked with that of Harold Shelbourne.

CHAPTER XXII.

MAN PROPOSES AND GOD DISPOSES.

THE cars were whirling over the road at as many miles an hour as was thought necessary to make up for loss of time. The placid passengers were nodding, chatting, or nibbling something from baskets or lunch boxes, not one of them, perhaps, guessing that unless they passed a certain point in the road by a given time a collision with another train was inevitable. The conductor knew it, though, and the engineer and the brakemen, and took it easily, as men do matters of life and death in these United States.

There were passengers from every place along the road. Those from Carltonville having entered last sat together at one end of a car. Fresher from the outer air than the others, they were all broad awake.

Mrs. North, indignantly pondering on whatever had awakened her wrath at " The Pines," sat bolt upright, holding her small traveling bag in both gloved hands, and looking as much offended and as greatly shocked as was possible to a prim minister's wife of forty.

The rich hunchbacked gentleman was devouring sandwiches prepared by his niece with all the care of an expectant heiress desirous of winning favor, and congratulating himself on having fallen in with a train of cars the managers of which had proper spirit and flew over the rails, instead of creeping ; and Hepsibah Drew and a beautiful girl in an oddly made rich silk dress and coarse hood and shawl, sat close together.

At first they only exchanged meaning glances—at last,

after convincing themselves that all in the car were strangers, the girl bent forward and whispered to the old woman.

“Safe! safe at last! Ah! I could go upon my knees and thank Heaven. ‘The Pines’ are miles behind us now.”

“And we don’t know what new trouble we’re going to,” whispered Hepsibah.

“The horrid deception is over, and I dread nothing,” replied the girl.

“Ah! poor thing, you don’t know—you don’t know,” said Hepsibah. “What did you bring with you?”

“A few old garments. Have I not acted the thief long enough? Only these and what little money I had about me. There will be fine searching for Harold Shelbourne to-morrow.”

“Hush! hush!” plead the nurse.

“Why, are you afraid they will find him?”

“Oh, deary, don’t, don’t, deary; some one may hear.”

“Never fear. But I have not told you what happened after you had gone.”

“No, tell me.”

“You see that tall lady in black, sitting bolt upright—looking very much shocked?”

“Yes; well?”

“She is Mrs. North. She stopped at ‘The Pines’ to take Master Harold home with her. The boy, not being accountable for his actions, refused to go. You know he had a motive for not being hurried off in custody to-night.”

“Yes, yes!”

“So my good lady kindly hurried him up, to exert her influence over him. She did, indeed.”

“Well, well?”

“And finding the cub was sulking in the drawing-room, entered. That woman has sharp eyes; she is a very woman, Hepsibah. The secret that has puzzled two men and baffled all the rest of the world; the secret Dr. Rawdon and Mr. Shelbourne never guessed; that Richard Rawdon never dreamt of; was hers at once.”

“What do you mean?”

“She found Harold Shelbourne out.”

“Oh! great heavens!”

“And swept out of the house after giving Mr. Shelbourne a piece of her mind, but no explanation.”

“Then he does not know”

“He is as much in the dark as ever.”

“But he will; he will!”

“Perhaps; not yet, however. They were searching ‘The Pines’ house and grounds for that blessed Harold, who has insulted or offended the clergyman’s wife in the most mysterious manner. I heard it suggested that the river should be dragged. Do you think it is possible: barely possible that he might be there, lying at the bottom?”

“Don’t! don’t!”

“Oh, I’m in such a mad, merry mood to-night. Don’t be angry. I’m free! free! free! I could shout and laugh! Oh, the awful slavery I have fled from! But the shackles are broken. Hepsibah?”

“Well, dear.”

“It seems wrong, and yet so funny; stern, cold, grim Mr. Shelbourne is supposed to be a gay Lothario. How that prim lady is thinking of him. Her eyebrows meet, she scowls, and purses up her mouth. There’ll be a commotion at ‘The Pines’ soon. A lost heir and a lost heiress. Some will say that they have run away together; that the palm has twined its branches with the pine.”

“Oh, deary, you frighten me.”

“Do I? Well, I’ll be still; still as death. How do I look?”

“Beautiful, deary.”

“Surely, in this old hood. Am I flushed? I feel feverish.”

“Your cheeks are like roses.”

“I must be calm. I dare not be ill. I’ll try to sleep. May I put my head on your shoulder?”

“Certainly, deary.”

“Oh, me! oh, me! how it throbs. Hepsibah, what are you going to say to them?”

“To whom?”

“To those who are anxious to meet the Cuban heiress.”

“I’ll say I found you; no, that Davy brought you to me, and that I’ve been with you all my life. I’ll show ’em

the little petticoat and the mark on your arm. That's all I can do."

"You shall live with me always."

"Ah! I shall live nowhere long."

"Years and years. There, nurse, I'll talk no more but go to sleep. Don't you like me as well as Harold? I'm sure I am prettier."

"You'll drive me crazy, child."

The girl shut her lips determinedly and closed her eyes. Soon the feverish restlessness passed away and she slumbered. Hepsibah nodded also. The passengers were almost all asleep. The engineer, the brakemen, the conductor, were broad awake. Steam was being crowded on; anxious eyes were cast southward.

"I say, Jem, how many minutes to the bend?"

"Five."

"It will take ten."

"Then God help Patty and the babies."

Faster! faster! One minute—three—faster yet! Great Heaven have mercy! What are those red eyes? What comes thundering down the track? A demon!—a horrible, crashing, crushing demon!—the other train! and they have not reached the bend; and never will!

For the next minute the two trains have met; have rushed into one another as though friends were embracing, and there is a horrible tumult, and smoke, and steam, and flame, and crushed iron, and wood, and human flesh, and blood lying in a hideous mass under the white moon.

It was in a lonely sort of a country place that the accident had happened, and, for some time, no aid came. At last, those uninjured managed to call the inmates of the nearest tavern, and from thence the news spread fast. When the sun arose they were still dragging dead and living from under the broken body of the mad iron horse.

Want of forethought and two odd glasses of whisky had made a good many orphans and widows that day.

Twenty dead men were spread upon the grass. Half a dozen bodies were found in fragments, and the living were so maimed for the most part, that they had better been dead also. But some had escaped without mark for scar.

Among others, a young woman and an old one. They lay senseless in each other's arms.

Not dead ! If injured, internally not outwardly. The old woman wore an old-fashioned black bonnet and small shawl. The girl had under her coarse outer garments a dress of rich brocade.

Next to these they found a dead body, a lady dressed in black, her fingers stiffened about a small traveling bag, marked on the silver plate of the lock "Amelia North."

Whatever she had discovered, Mrs. North would never have the power to tell in this world with a living tongue.

As soon as the news could be spread, special trains came to the spot to bring the friends of the injured parties. From below Mr. North arrived, grief-stricken and broken-hearted, and almost at the same moment the train from Carltonville brought the party from "The Pines," Mr. Shelbourne, Richard and Dr. Rawdon.

They did what they could for the unhappy clergyman, whose agony rendered him almost incapable of attending his duty of conveying his wife's remains to her late home, and then sought the couch on which old Hepsibah still lay in the little tavern. She had never opened her eyes or appeared for one moment even partially conscious.

Mr. Shelbourne gave directions to the hostess as to her care, and informing them as well as the physician in attendance, that as an old and attached servant she held a claim upon him, and that he would be responsible for every expense, turned to examine the other sufferers. It seemed even yet possible that Harold might be amongst them.

To his relief, the dead as well as the living beings were total strangers to him. No youth, in the slightest degree resembling the unhappy Harold, lay on these couches or upon the grass, where so many ghastly objects were covered by clean white linen. At every step he feared to look upon the countenance of his unloved and unloving son, but the pang was spared him. Wherever the lad had flown he certainly was not a passenger in this ill-fated train.

As he was turning away the physician of the little town stopped him.

"You are from Carltonville, sir?" he said.

"Yes, sir,"

“Then, perhaps, you can assist us in identifying an injured person from that place. All the others have been claimed. The people at the station who came down remembered as having entered the car, but no one knows her. This way. She’s as pretty a creature as I ever saw.”

Opening a little door, the three men stood beside a small rude bed, occupied at ordinary times by one of the servants of the tavern.

There, on the course but clean pillows, lay the most beautiful face, pallid as death. Its black hair clustering over the temples, its lips pressed together as if in some moment of agony. One arm had dropped from beneath the coverlid, and was exposed to view from the shoulder down. It was wondrously shapely—a dimple for an elbow, a soft slope from thence to the wrist; but, above that elbow, was a rose-red, star-shaped mark, vividly distinct in the unusual pallor of the transparent skin.

“I do not know her,” said Mr. Shelbourne.

“Nor I,” said the doctor.

But, suddenly from behind there came a cry, a low exclamation of fear and horror, and Richard brushed passed them and knelt beside the couch.

“I do!” he said. “Ah, beautiful, beautiful creature. I have found you at last; and you are dead—quite dead! Never a smile for me—never a touch of your dear hand? Dead! dead! dead! Oh, yes, I know her! Give me her body, that I may bury it! No strange hands shall touch thee, sweetest! I promised to aid thee, and this is all I can do for thee!”

“Is the boy mad?” cried the doctor. “Dick, what do you know of this girl?—who is not dead, by the way. Have you really ever seen her before?”

Richard made no answer

“Not dead!” he murmured; “not dead! Oh, thank Heaven! But she looks like one just dying! She is too near Heaven; we cannot bring her back!”

This time Mr. Shelbourne touched him on the arm.

“Explain yourself,” he said rather sternly. “Be a man. If this young lady is a friend of yours let me know it in so many words. Has she friends? Who are they?”

“She told me she was friendless,” answered Richard,

scarcely conscious of what she said. "Ah, why did she not trust me? I might have saved her."

"The boy has certainly taken leave of his senses," said the doctor.

"Richard," said Mr. Shelbourne, still more sternly than was his wont when addressing this, his youthful favorite, "it is your duty to explain yourself. Who and what is this lady, and what do you know of her?"

Richard lifted his head and looked at him.

"Her name I do not know," he said. "Before I answer other questions tell me, I pray you, whether she will live!"

"That is impossible," said the doctor.

"Utterly, until some change takes place," said the other physician.

"Then, sir," said Richard, "I can only say this: What I know of this lady I have promised to keep inviolably secret. If she dies I will reveal it; if she lives, only at her bidding. There is a mystery about her, a suspicious one; yet I trust her. I feel that whatever it may be, she is the wronged and not the wrong-doer. I love her! I adore her! and I have vowed to be her knight and champion! I will tell the tale when that lady's pale lips command its utterance, or when they are closed forever."

The other men regarded the ardent youth with astonishment. Mr. Shelbourne seemed a little flushed and angry, but a suspicious moisture bedewed the eyes of the doctor.

"I was romantic myself in my youth," he said; "very romantic. Ah, the boy is like me after all! No matter, Dick; keep your secret. There's no harm in it. I'll trust you."

Mr. Shelbourne said nothing, but turned and left the room, as though his part in the scene were over. The doctor lingered.

"Cheer up, Dick," he said. "You'll tell me all about it some day; and, mind you, if she gets well and is the right kind of a girl, no matter how poor, I shan't say no to a match. Here, landlady, my nephew knows this young lady; take good care of her, I haven't much about me, but this will be enough for present expenses until her folks are told. Of course she has folks, Dick. Now, my boy, come along. Shelbourne is on his high horse. Of course you

couldn't let out your boy-nonsense before him ; wait until we are alone. You shall come down again with me if you like," and he hurried the bewildered boy away.

At first Richard resisted, then some new motive made him just as anxious to reach Carltonville as he had been to remain. At the depot he left his companions suddenly, and betook himself to Alfred Fairfield's residence.

"I have no time to lose," he said. "She is at P—I fear, dying!"

"You mean the lady of 'The Pines?'"

"Whom else could I mean? You have heard of that fearful railroad accident?"

"Certainly."

"She had left 'The Pines' that night. I found her amongst the injured at a little tavern at P——, entirely alone, deserted, friendless. Alfred, you remember our compact?"

"I do. Could I forget it?"

"Alfred, we must be her friends, her knights, her protectors."

"We will. My hand on it."

"At present, if she lives, she is safe ; but what steps are to be taken? What must we do?"

"I will go at once to P——" said Alfred, "represent myself as her brother, and claim a brother's right to guard her."

"And I?" said Richard.

"Can you not accompany me?"

"Yes ; but I shall awaken suspicion."

"I will put an end to that. I will request your company on a fishing excursion."

"Ah ! famous !"

"There will be no objection. We shall leave together, with the necessary apparatus. These we shall abandon and make our way to P——. There if she lives, she shall find two men devoted to her service ; two brothers, who will guard her with her life's blood."

"God bless you for the words ! She shall !"

"Richard, remember our compact ! Friends forever ! Yet you love her very dearly !"

"I do ! I do !"

“And I adore her!”

“Alfred! Yet stay. You are right; we are rivals, but none the less brothers! To-morrow, then.”

“To-morrow I will be with you, and we will fly to her. Wait one moment; has any news been heard of Harold Shelbourne?”

“None.”

“She did not leave ‘The Pines’ with him then?”

“That is impossible.”

“Yet she may have been about to meet him.”

“You make my blood boil.”

“Ah, Richard, you cannot doubt that it is possible?”

“Possible; but, Alfred, not probable.”

“Why?”

“She does not like the little wretch.”

“How do you know?”

“She told me so.”

“Told you so?”

“Yes. I have let the secret betray itself. I met her two weeks ago. I have spoken to her. I promised not to reveal the act, but you are her champion also. You have a right to know.”

And Richard narrated the details of that interview in the old library, the lady’s every word, and look, and action.

Alfred pondered deeply.

“We will know the truth,” he said. “We will certainly know the truth if she lives.”

And with these words, and a lingering grasp of the hands, the friends parted.

There was no news of Harold all that day. The village was scoured, the ferries and depots watched, active measures taken, rewards offered, and still no one could be found who had seen the youth leave “The Pines,” or who had met him in any part of the neighborhood.

Mr. Shelbourne’s departure was delayed. Indeed it seemed impossible to tell when he might leave “The Pines.” Harold must be found ere matters could be finally settled, and as yet not the slightest clue was obtained to his whereabouts.

On the morrow Alfred Faifield called with his invita-

tion to a fishing excursion, and the two young men left together.

They reached P—— about noon, and proceeded at once to the little tavern. Some of the injured persons remained there still, a few had left this world for a better, others were so far convalescent as to have been removed by their friends. Old Hepsibah was still apparently unconscious of all that passed around her, and was watched constantly by her nurse, who declared her sinking fast.

All this Richard and Alfred heard from the landlord on the porch, ere they could receive an answer to their query in regard to the mysterious lady on whom both their minds were fixed. When at last they contrived to make the landlord listen as well as talk, he stood for a moment puzzled, scratching his head.

“ You don’t mean the minister’s wife that was killed ? ”

“ No, no. A beautiful young lady.”

“ Two or three ladies have been taken home. Let me see, my wife knows all about it. Here, Jane.”

At the call the landlady came running to the door.

“ Ah ! ” she said, the moment her eyes fell upon Richard. “ I thought you’d come. You’ll be glad to hear your young lady is nicely. Coming on quite smart. Her uncle took her away yesterday.”

“ Her uncle,” cried Richard. “ Taken away ! Impossible ! impossible ! ”

“ Well, it happened in the oddest way,” said the landlady. “ There have been a lot of folks down here to identify friends. Amongst others a lawyer, a handsome, middle-aged gentleman, who came to see about a clerk of his, a young man named Thomas Burrige. Well, the young fellow wasn’t hurt to speak of—a bruise or two, that was all, and had gone home to his parents. So the lawyer, mighty glad to hear it, sat down to have a bite of dinner and a glass of ale. He was quite an affable gentleman, and chatted away the while.

“ ‘ Many in the house ? ’ says he.

“ ‘ Well,’ says I, ‘ more than I like to see, poor things. I’m very sorry for ’em. But most have their friends with ’em. The one that’s the prettiest is a young lady, quite alone, and wandering in her mind, the loveliest thing I ever

saw, I think. One gentleman knew her, but nobody else. If 'twasn't for her good face I should think she wasn't just what she ought to be. But she looks like an angel.'

" 'Can you describe her?' says he.

" 'Yes,' says I; 'she's small and very dark. Her eyes are black, her cheeks beautiful, though that's partly fever, and there's a mark on her arm I should think she'd be known by, a red mark, for all the world like a star.'

" 'Like a star,' says he. 'Where is it, on the left arm, above the elbow?'

" 'Yes,' says I. 'Why, you don't know her?' says I.

" 'I do, I think,' says he. 'This is astonishing, how things come to us when we least expect them.'

" 'Lor,' says I, 'and the young gentleman was *so* anxious about her. He'll be very glad.'

" 'Let me see the young lady,' says he.

" So I took him up. She was in a fever, tossing and talking to herself. He looked at her, and then muttered, 'Cuban all over.' I couldn't tell what he meant. The young lady arn't a Cuban, is she? "

" I think she is," said Richard.

" That was it then. Well, he looked at her arm, and examined the star-shaped mark, and then spoke to her. I think he asked whether she knew him! At that she started up and looked at him.

" 'Don't touch me, says she. 'I'll never go back to the—the——' What was the name? Some house or place she must have meant."

" The Pines? " asked Richard.

" Yes, sir, that's it—'The Pines;' and says the gentleman, 'There, there, you never shall.' Says she, 'No one can make me; I'm an heiress.'

" Then he smiled to himself and said, 'You're right there. 'It's best to humor her,' said he to me. 'If the doctors say she can be moved I'll trouble you to make my niece ready to go with me to-night.' "

" His niece? "

" Yes, sir, that's what he said. Well, the young lady seemed much better after that, quite quiet; and when she went away she looked so well, and laid nicely asleep in the

carriage among the pillows. No doubt you'll find her quite recovered, sir."

"No doubt," said Richard, dreamily; "but as I do not know this uncle of hers, will you be kind enough to tell me his name?"

"That's it," said the landlady, pointing to a card stuck in the chimney glass. "I say, John, hand it here, will you."

The landlord obeyed, and the young men darted forward. Richard caught the card, and Alfred read over his shoulder the name, "Harvey Grier."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE HEIRESS FOUND.

FOR more than twenty years had Harvey Grier searched for the missing child, or for some proof of her death; with the acuteness of a lawyer and skill that should have done credit to a detective, with a certain perseverance peculiar to himself, he had endeavored by bribes and stratagems and deep laid plots to fathom the mystery. Nor was his activity to be wondered at, for never was lawyer so richly fed. The resources from which the gold of the parties interested was drawn seemed inexhaustible. Of late the letters had been dated "New York," and as the days passed on the most magnificent promises were made in case of success. The lawyer had discovered that the writer was a Mrs. Bertram, residing at — Hotel, but what she looked like, and whether young or old, it was impossible to discover, as no one save a servant woman, who spoke broken Spanish, was ever visible.

Urged on by these anonymous letters and plenteous fees, Harvey Grier had spent twenty long years in secret search. These proving fruitless, he had resorted to advertisements, with equal ill success. He felt confident that the heiress was still living; the chain of evidence indicated that fact clearly. But the double secret in which her disappearance was involved seemed unfathomable.

And now, by means of the purest accident, the lost heir-ess was discovered. The star on her arm, her Cuban features, all the mystery which surrounded her, proved her identity at once.

Now that he had her in a place of safety, he was overjoyed, and without delay wrote to communicate his success to his anonymous correspondent. An answer was received begging him to bring the young lady at once to Mrs. Bertram, at —— Hotel, and by the time it reached him his beautiful charge was fast recovering. Indeed, she was so well that the next day Mr. Grier sought an interview to acquaint her with the fact that her relatives was aware of her existence and anxious to receive her.

Instead of expressing astonishment, the young lady received him in a manner that, had he not been the most self-possessed of mortals, would have confused him. As it was, he could scarcely resolve upon the proper course of action. He cleared his throat and began :

“ Miss —— . Excuse me ; what shall I call you ? ”

“ You know best, sir,” said the young lady. “ My real name is an enigma to me. As a Cuban heiress, doubtless, it is something worth hearing, Mr. Grier.”

Harvey Grier started.

“ You know the reason of the interest I take in you, it appears ? ” he said.

“ I know you are a legal gentleman, Mr. Grier, and that you have been searching for me for many years. You have seen the red star on my arm, and I have here something I have hidden about my person for a long time ; the garment which you describe in your advertisement.

She took from the stand at her side a parcel and handed it the lawyer.

He unfolded it. It was a petticoat of white merino, made for the youngest of infants, fastened by silken strings and embroidered in a magnificent pattern of leaves and grapes in scarlet. Among the leaves were skillfully wrought the letters “ D. J. W.”

“ There is the proof,” said the girl, quietly. “ I presume the counterpart of that garment never existed.”

“ You are prepared to meet your relatives ? ” said the lawyer.

“Yes, at any moment. I am growing quite strong.”

“In an hour, then, I shall call a carriage.”

“Yes, if you please.”

The lawyer hesitated:

“You will have no aversion to telling me why you have concealed your existence so carefully, or who has restrained you from claiming your name and inheritance? Explanations of this kind will be required by your relatives.”

“I shall never give them.”

“Madame!”

“Hear me, once for all, Mr. Grier,” said the girl; “they may discard or receive me, as they like, although I know I am the person they have searched for so earnestly, but not for a kingdom, not for my life, will I, either to you or to them, offer the slightest clue to my past life. I was abandoned. Chance or fate; or, I may better say, God’s mighty hand, has brought me back to them. So let it stand. I will never tell by what name I have been called, where I have lived, or at what place, nor why I have never answered those inquiries which I have so long been aware of—never while life lasts; the secret shall die with me.”

“Suspicion ——” began Mr. Grier.

“Aye, suspicion will attach itself to me,” said the girl.

“It may; I care not. My lips are sealed.”

And Harvey Grier, anxious and perplexed, bowed as in assent, and waited the arrival of the carriage, with a fear that the wilful creature might even yet escape him.

She made no such attempt, however; and was ready when he once more entered her apartment.

A lovelier creature he had never seen, and, lawyer as he was, he trusted in her purity, and, old as he was, his heart beat faster as her hand touched his arm.

Together they drove to the hotel, and inquired for Mrs. Bertram.

The inquiry brought to the reception parlor a servant woman, who, in broken Spanish, requested that the lady and gentleman would follow her, and leading the way entered an apartment on an upper floor.

There the light was subdued by curtains and shades, that, for a moment, they could but discern a form, seated at the

further end of the room, and heard a faint, shrill voice uttering exclamations of thanksgivings in the Spanish language.

At last, however, they became accustomed to the dimness, and saw the figure in the chair more plainly.

It was that of a very, very old woman, her dark face a mass of wrinkles, and her hair snow white. She was slightly bent, and her hands, which held a staff between them, trembled; but these hands were small and loaded with jewels, and upon the black lace at her throat a diamond, of immense size, flashed and flickered.

It was the face of one who had been a beauty. Eyes that had glittered more than the jewels she wore, long, before. A face which awakened strange fancies, and made one think of ghosts arisen to walk the earth. A century must have well nigh passed over that head. She was the oldest human being the lawyer had ever seen. Awe stricken, he looked at her and marveled.

Suddenly, this strange being stretched her arms toward the girl, and cried:

“Dolores! Dolores! Oh, I need no proof! it is her mother come to life again! The hair, the eyes! Ah! come to me! No, stop! I want proof! I will have proof! They shall have no reason to say I am in my dotage! The star-mark; the garment the babe wore; let me see them.”

The girl advanced; kneeling before the old woman she bared her arm. On its whiteness lay a rose-red star.

“Dolores!” said the old woman again.

Then unfolding something she had hidden until then beneath her shawl, they lay across the Cuban lady’s knee, a skirt, embroidered in scarlet, in a pattern of grapes and leaves; and then, without a word, was clasped into that aged bosom, and sobbed over and caressed. At last the old woman lifted her eyes.

“I cannot doubt,” she said; “I have seen the star; I have seen the work of my own hands. There never was another garment like the one lying there. This is my great-grandchild: the daughter of my grand-daughter—Dolores Inez Bertram. You have given me back my treasure. You shall be made rich for it. When I, who am past a hundred, speak it, it is taking a vow before God.

Do not doubt me ; but give me a pledge that you will never tell what I shall tell you. This is the child of my granddaughter. She was a wilful thing. A beauty amongst the beautiful Cuban girls. So her mother was before her ; so was I. We had married strangers and had English names. Mine is Bertram. Dolores' mother was left a widow early, and came home to 'The Palms'—we named it so from the trees around it—to live with her children. We were extremely wealthy and greatly respected ; and Dolores was our pet, our treasure ; but she was wilful. There came to the place a man from New York, name Wilford. A handsome, dissipated, bad, bad man. He contrived to become acquainted with Dolores, and courted her. Her mother forbade him the house, and she ran away and married him.

“Ah, me ! the young are always wilful, and she ran away with him, thinking to be forgiven. I'd have done it, for I loved her dearly. But her mother was stern—a cold, stern woman. So to her letters there was no answer, and we heard no more until a stranger from New York brought us tidings. Her husband was a villain, and had married her for her money, and when he found her mother would not forgive her he forsook her—went off with another woman and deserted her.

“Then her mother's heart softened, and she came here. For months she could not find her, but a last hearing that a beautiful creature had been found wandering crazy on a country road, she went to look at her. It was Dolores, and she did not know her, for her mind was quite gone. So she brought her back to Cuba, to our home ; and she lived only a few weeks ; but before she died she told us how she had had a child—a daughter—and driven quite wild by her husband's desertion, had been about to drown herself and it with her, when a watchman stopped her. How after that she felt madness coming upon her, and thought friends were dragging her away, and could remember nothing more. But before that everything seemed plain. She told us of the mark on the arm, of its age, of the name of the village, and its situation, and that it wore a skirt I had wrought for her in her own babyhood. Then she said, 'find my child for Dolores' sake,' and died with her head upon my arm.

“We were broken-hearted, for our darling had been our treasure and we resolved to find her child; but we were proud, my daughter and her son prouder than I, and we resolved to keep our secret. They, as you know, strove all their lives for one object. They died unsuccessful. I, the oldest, have outlived them and their pride. In my old age I took this long, long journey to be near the man who was still searching for the child of my Dolores. And God has blessed me! She is found! I clasp her to my bosom! And now tell me who has hidden her from us?”

“Forgive me,” she said; “I venerate you, I love you, but never, never will I reveal the secret of my past life. Love me as the daughter of Dolores, accept me as the child lost and found again; but do not ask me what I will never, can never tell!”

At this moment a sound of knocking at the door interrupted them. The old woman started and gave a low cry. The eyes of the young girl turned toward the door, and the servant advanced to open it.

As she did so a gentleman pushed her and entered, despite her efforts to prevent him.

It was Richard Rawdon.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A DEATH AND A CONFESSION.

HE looked at the young girl, and said slowly:

“Old Hepsibah is dying. Hasten if you wish to see her alive! She had sent you a message which I give without comprehending. She bade me say, ‘Tell her the secret is a secret no more. I will free her from it when I die.’”

The girl burst into tears.

“Take me to her!” said she. “Take me to her, Richard!”

“Away from me? No, no, Dolores! you will never return!” cried the old Cuban lady.

Dolores knelt at her feet.

“I swear to return; I vow never to leave you, and to

answer you frankly every question you may put to me. You hear the message; the secret will be one no longer. But Hespibah has been good to me. I must see her ere she dies."

"Go, then," said the old woman. "And you, Mr. Grier, keep with my darling and bring her back to me."

The lawyer looked at the young lady.

"Come," she said; "you have a right to know all," and he obeyed.

A carriage stood at the door. The three stepped into it, were driven to the railroad depot, and whirled toward Carltonville.

All were silent, but the lady spoke to Richard once.

"How did you discover me?" she said, and Richard whispered:

"By the light of love! I have never lost sight of you. Had danger threatened you, I should have been beside you to protect you. And when old Hespibah began to call for her beautiful girl, and speak of you as having been with her at the time of the collision, I knew whom she meant and where to find you. Let me ask you one question: Do you know anything of Harold Shelbourne?"

"Yes."

"Where is he?"

The lady looked at him for a moment, then cast down her eyes.

"That miserable boy, that very mockery of manhood, will never offend mortal eyes again," she said.

"Is he dead?"

But the lady made no answer, and Richard gazed at her in astonishment. A fancy was in his mind—a strange, wild fancy, that made him think that he was mad.

In the upper chamber of the little tavern Hepsibah lay dying. When those who had obeyed the summons entered the room, they saw that plainly. Her eyes were sunken, her breath came with an effort. But she had strength left to clasp the girl in her arms, and kiss her tenderly.

“The end has come,” she said. “My confession must be made. Call the others quickly.”

Dr. Rawdon, who was standing near her, obeyed, and in a moment Mr. Shelbourne and Alfred Fairfield were in the room. On the former she fixed her dying eyes.

“To you I must speak, sir,” she said. “I haven’t long to talk, and if I die without confessing I shall never rest. I want God’s forgiveness first, but yours next, yours next.”

“Go back to the night the mistress died, sir, for I must begin there. You know you gave me the baby to take care of, and I was alone with it for days. The night she died it cried, and wailed as it knew it was going to lose its mother. To quiet it I gave it some drops, as I thought, but I made a mistake, and fed it instead with laudanum. I never knew I had done it until I found the child was dead, and then I thought I should go mad, partly with grief and partly with the dread of punishment and disgrace. So I think I was going out of my mind when my brother, Davy Drew, the watchman of the town as long as he lived, knocked at the door.

“I opened it, and he had a poor little baby in his arms. Some wretched woman had left it with him and ran away, after he’d kept her from drowning herself. The squire’s was the place to fetch it first, he thought. But I told him your lady was dying, and he couldn’t see you. Then the devil at my elbow put it into my head to make him take away the poor dead baby, and leave the living one with me.

“‘No harm,’ said Beelzebub, ‘it’s only a grave one place or another, and you’ll make folks happy and save yourself.’ So I coaxed Davy, and threatened and cried until I had my way; and he took the dead child to the poorhouse, and I kept the poor woman’s, and I thought no living being would find me out. But sin overreached itself. When everything was so it couldn’t be undone, I found out that I’d made the maddest mistake, and done the most awful thing, for the baby was a girl.

“A girl? Great heavens!” cried Mr. Shelbourne.

“A girl, and yours was a boy. Well, any one not crazy would have confessed then. I didn’t, I just kept waiting, putting it off, and hiding it still until you went away.

Then, thinking for sure I'd die soon, I kept on hiding the secret. No one had any care of the child but me.

"So she grew larger, and I dressed her in such clothes as little boys wear, and no one knew, and you stayed away. Every time any one looked at the child I expected them to guess. But they didn't.

"So she kept on growing until she knew the truth, and then she loved me so, that for my sake she promised to keep the secret. But she found old dresses of her mother's and grandmother's, and would wear them now and then in spite of me. That's where the ghost story came from.

"All this time she suffered dreadfully from shame and fear. But she loved me, and she swore never to expose me until some one found out for themselves. No one did until poor Mrs. North called for Harold to go with her.

"The moment she looked at him, she said :

" 'You are a woman, a shameless woman in men's clothes ! ' and that made us sure of discovery. Oh, you've been looking for Harold ; you needn't any more ; there he stands—that girl ! She has passed for your son for years ! And—oh, hush ; breath for one moment more—a little breath. I'd never have told you, but your son—is not dead. I'd stupefied the child—not killed it ! He is——"

The old woman's voice failed her, but her dying finger was lifted and pointed toward Richard.

Mr. Shelbourne stood petrified with astonishment.

"Am I dreaming ? " he said. "This cannot be true ! "

"It is ! " said the doctor, solemnly. "My loss is your gain. Richard is the child whom the watchman brought to the poorhouse, and who was then thought dead. And he is no longer my nephew, but your son."

He paused.

The father looked at his handsome boy, and stood with eager eyes and outstretched hands, and opened his arms, and Richard rushed into them.

While they stood in that long embrace, old Hepsibah breathed her last ; and the Cuban heiress gave her hand to Harvey Grier and glided from the room.

CHAPTER XXV.

OLD HEPSIBAH'S FUNERAL.

It was a lovely morning. The sun was high in the blue and cloudless sky, and the white stones, washed by the last night's showers, stood spotless slabs of snow amidst the velvet turf of the green grave-yard.

Around a grave, but newly dug, stood a group. My readers will recognize Mr. Shelbourne, Richard, and the doctor and Alfred Fairfield. Their faces were grave, their heads uncovered, for before them stood the bier on which reposed all that was mortal of old Hepsibah Drew.

On the other side of the bier a white-haired clergyman had just prepared to utter the solemn burial-service, and farther in the distance stood the servants of "The Pines," and villagers, whom interest as well as curiosity had drawn to the spot.

Suddenly, amidst the waiting silence, came a sound—the quick roll of carriage wheels, that paused at the grave-yard gates.

All eyes were turned toward the spot. A barouche, drawn by milk-white horses, had drawn up in that solemn place, and from it a footman assisted two ladies to descend. One was Dolores, the other the old Cuban lady.

They advanced slowly, the aged matron leaning on the girl's arm. Both were dressed in black, heavy, lusterless silk, which swept in gloomy folds over the green turf they trod so reverently.

In her hand the old woman bore something wrapped in white linen.

Not a gem glittered on the maiden's bosom, not a jewel on her finger. Dropping her great-grandmother's arm, she knelt beside the bier. Tears fell from her dark eyes and trickled down her cheeks, and she pressed her lips upon the brow of the dead woman.

“You loved me,” she whispered. “Despite the wrong you did me, you loved me, and I loved you. I forgave you long ago; and God and his angels have also forgiven you to-day. Farewell! farewell!” and rising, she drew back behind the group, waving her hand as though to forbid address or approach.

Then the old Cuban lady advanced. Unfolding a kerchief, she drew from its folds a cross and wreath of *immortelles*, and laid them upon the dead woman’s bosom.

“Thy religion was not mine,” she said, “nor thy country; but thou wilt be none the worse for my prayers.”

Then, bending low, she murmured some words in Spanish, and looked down upon the frozen face.

“Dolores,” she said, and the girl was at her side in a moment. “Dolores, she was good to thee.”

They stood together then, and the service went on to its solemn end.

When it was over, the crowd of strangers dispersed, the servants of “The Pines” went home; Mr. Shelbourne walked slowly away with the doctor; and in the graveyard remained only the Cuban heiress, her great-grandmother, Alfred Fairfield and Richard Shelbourne.

The former hesitated, the latter approached boldly.

“We meet once more,” he said, softly. “Yonder grave holds one who has done us both some wrong, who has woven much of sorrow into the web of our lives. You have forgiven her, and I say ‘amen.’ You are happy now?”

“Very happy,” she murmured. “Yet I can scarcely look you in the face for shame. What a life mine has been!”

“Do you remain here?” asked Richard.

“We shall live in New York,” said Dolores. “My aged relative could not bear the fatigue of another journey, and, indeed, I do not desire to live in Cuba. In the great city where we shall reside no one will know our story. It would be different in Havana. Probably I shall never set foot upon its soil.”

Richard’s eyes glistened.

“You will not forbid me to visit you?” he said.

“Surely not, if you can forgive one who has acted al-

most as your enemy, who has stood between you and a father's home and heart so long. An imposter—a——"

"Hush, hush!" said Richard. "I am repaid for all if you admit me to your presence."

Then, remembering Alfred, he began:

"There's another—my friend," and turned toward the spot where he had a moment before been standing. He was not there. As they began to speak, he had offered his arm to the old Cuban lady, and was assisting her to enter her carriage.

"I must join her," said Dolores, and Richard walked beside her over the turf. It was but for a moment, but her hand was on his arm for the first time, and in all his life he never ceased to remember it.

"Good-bye," she said at parting. "You know where to find us, and you will be welcome."

Richard bowed over her hand, touched the folds of her black dress as he drew them from contact with the wheel, and as the carriage rolled away stood bareheaded, with his bright eyes following the lady of his love.

A sigh aroused him. Turning he saw Alfred Fairfield leaning against the paling, his cheek pale, his eyes down-cast, his brow knit gloomily.

"My friend, you are ill," cried Richard.

"No, not ill."

"You have some grief, then, which I know nothing of."

"Yes, Richard, my heart is very sad, and you are the cause."

"I!"

"You, Richard Shelbourne. You have not forgotten our vow?"

"Forgotten that? Ah, never while I live can I forget it."

"We vowed to serve her; to deliver her from enemies and danger."

"Aye, Alfred."

"She needs no friend now. She is rich, happy, shielded from all danger."

"Thank Heaven!"

“Thank Heaven, also say I. And we also vowed that whatever befell us we would be brothers.”

“Brother, we did.”

“God bless you, Dick! And I have the strength to keep that vow. Yet the trial is greater than I feared. I will confess. On that day I believed that, if I chose, I might win this mysterious beauty, whom at first sight we both adored. I sought to bind your friendship to me, that I might have the woman I adored without losing my brother. I play a different part. It is mine to crush down all anger against a successful rival. I have done it, but, dear Dick, forgive me, not without a struggle.”

Richard Shelbourne looked at him.

“A successful rival?” he said. “Explain yourself.”

“Dolores loves you, Richard,” said Alfred.

“Loves me!”

“Yes. I have seen it in her face, I have heard it in her voice. Who so keen as I to read that tale? She loves you, Dick. God bless you both. You have but to woo and win her.”

“Are you sure—sure?”

“I could stake my existence on the fact.”

“Alfred, I am happier than a king. Oh, forgive me, my brother! How selfish I am! Yet the joy, the bliss! Dolores loves me! It is too, too glorious!”

Alfred smiled sadly.

“Your joy is my balm,” he said. “Do not think of me; I shall conquer my own heart. Good-bye, Dick. There is no fitter place to say farewell than this. To-morrow I shall leave my native land and for England.”

“For England! And when will you return?”

“When I can frankly grasp the hand of Dolores as the wife of my dearest friend,” said Alfred. “The time will come; do not fear. Until then farewell, and may Heaven speed your wooing.”

He held out his hand, and Richard took it, and in the very act burst into tears, the first he had shed since the years of childhood.

“I purchase my joy dearly,” he said, “at the loss of my dear friend’s happiness. Farewell, farewell, Alfred. I shall always have a pang at my heart until I hear that you

have loved and won some girl as fair and pure-hearted as Dolores."

So they parted, and the sun sank the next day upon a vessel far out upon the blue Atlantic, on whose decks Alfred Fairfield stood, straining his to catch the last glimpse of his native land, the land he left that his vow might not be broken.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A BETROTHAL.

PERHAPS, now that Hepsibah's troubles were over; that Mr. Shelbourne had found a son to be proud of, to love and to comfort his old age; now that Dolores in her proper person had escaped the shame and terror of her life, and Richard, flushed with hope, felt certain of the fruition of his hopes, and the realization of his love dreams; the only one save Alfred Fairfield who was not completely happy was the doctor. Despite his placid disposition, and despite the fact that he saw as much of Richard as he chose, that gentleman felt that he had been robbed. He could not but see that father and son adored each other. That to be together was their greatest happiness, and that Dick was "his Dick" no more. His brow grew clouded, and his step slow. He brooded and sulked; and finally sold the cottage, and took board at the residence of a certain widow who, though certainly quite forty, was plump and pretty yet, and who afforded the comforts of a home to several single gentlemen.

"It was for Dick I lived," said the doctor, "and now that he is taken from me I might as well end my days in a boarding house." And the widow sympathized with him, and hinted with her head on one side, and tempting dimples in her rosy cheeks, that after all single gentlemen under her roof did not find quite such a dismal boarding house life as they might anticipate, poor things, from former experience.

At which the doctor only shook his head, as one who

should say, "Behold a single gentleman who cannot be comforted."

Yet, after all, he did not lose his appetite, and very soon grew sociable with the widow, and fatherly to her boy ; she had two, of ten and twelve. At first he sighed as he contemplated them, but bye and bye grew more cheerful, and one thing was noticeable, that so surely as there came into the village a circus or menagerie, or show of any sort, so surely first among the spectators were good old Doctor Rawdon and Mrs. Barrington's boys.

"It's my philoprogenitiveness, Dick," said the doctor, "I adore pets and children. I have to have something of the sort about me. I ought to have married and have children about me. It's too late now. Heigh oh, ah!" and the doctor would walk away, steadfastly refusing Richard's company, and acting the role of an injured man to the best of his ability.

His demeanor puzzled both father and son, and made the latter now and then a little sad, for he loved the doctor dearly. But all the other subjects then were trivial to Richard Rawdon beside the love he bore for Dolores, and the hope he entertained of her return of that emotion.

Often as he could leave the Pines, he betook himself to the city, and there, at her magnificent home, saw Dolores. She was kind to him. She smiled on him, and he believed her heart was his ; but the words which would have proved that belief true were very hard to speak.

True love is always doubtful of its own power. Scarcely could Richard believe that his merits were sufficient to win Dolores's heart.

At last he nerved himself to the point. And leaving the Pines one glorious summer morning, he found her seated at her piano in her pretty boudoir. She looked lovelier than ever. Her eyes were liquid, her dark tresses more glossy. She smiled as he entered and held out her hand.

"Welcome, Richard," she said. "What could tempt you from the green solitude of the Pines to the dusty, noisy city on such a day?"

The thoughts in Richard's heart rushed to his lips as she spoke.

"Where you are is Heaven," he said. "You draw me

to you as the magnet draws the needle. Nay, do not turn away," he continued, "I must speak at last. Dolores, I adore you. I cannot live without you. From that moment when you dawned upon me a beauteous mystery, I have felt that you alone could fill my heart. That heart is at your feet. Share my life. Be mine, my own forever, Dolores!"

The beautiful creature made no answer. Her black lashes veiled her oriental eyes. Her color came and went. Her bosom heaved beneath the snowy lawn which veiled it. Richard looked upon her; drew nearer, and gently took her hand. She did not resist. Then he grew bolder. His arm stole around her waist, and he lifted the taper fingers to his lips.

"Dolores," he whispered, "do you love me?"

And from the girl's lips came a scarcely audible whisper.

"Yes." Only "yes"; nothing more. Yet of all the essays on love, of all the long loved poems, none were ever more eloquent than that monosyllable "yes."

Oh, the exquisite moment, when her head drooped upon his bosom; when for the first time his lips touched her cheek. A wild wish crept in both hearts that time might stop there, and leave them standing thus forever.

Dolores was the first to speak. She drew herself timidly from her lover's arms, and looked into his ardent face with something like self-reproach in her own.

"Richard," she said, "I must not be selfish, neither must you. I owe a duty to my mother's aged grandmother. I can never leave her. While she lives I must be altogether hers. I love her, Richard, and she loves me. Nothing shall part us, no one shall divide my time and care while she exists. Think how old she is, and what sorrow she has known."

She paused suddenly, and both turned with a start, for an odd laugh burst upon their ears.

From a door behind them tottered forth the old Cuban lady, leaning on a gold headed cane.

"Dolores!" she cried. "Ah, Dolores, this is something new. And you never told me you had a lover. Nay, do not blush, I guessed it, and what is more I like this boy."

He is handsome and good, better than the other one. Ah, I am shrewd, I know them at a glance. I had fifty when I was young and beautiful. Listen, you two. You shall not wait for your merry-making until I am gone. I want to see my great-grandchild's wedding. It is what few do. I am nearly a century old. Come, you shall marry, and I will bless you, and dwell with you. What say you?"

For all answer, both knelt and kissed her hands.

She liked the homage, and over her old face passed a smile.

"Good children," she said. "Ah, you will be happy; you venerate the old. Now, go away and talk. I want to think. This will be grand pastime to me—Dolores's wedding."

Hand in hand the lovers left the room. And we shall not follow them. Did you want an eavesdropper during your courting-day, fair reader?

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE FATHER'S BLESSING.

It was not strange, perhaps, that Mr. Shelbourne should entertain a strong prejudice against the girl who had, in the character of Harold Shelbourne, occupied so singular a position beneath his roof; but Richard, blinded by his own love, was quite unprepared for it, and astonished by the grief and anger which an exposition of his betrothal to Dolores excited in his father's breast. For the first time he heard the real expression of Mr. Shelbourne's feelings, and grew pale with suppressed anger as he listened.

"I have forgiven Hepsibah," said Mr. Shelbourne. "I consider her conduct to have been that of a mad woman. Insanity excuses her; and against the dead I cherish no animosity. But this girl, who dwelt under my roof an impostor for so many years, who stood between my son and his inheritance, how can I welcome her as a daughter? My dear son, it is impossible; and unless some glamour has been cast about you, I cannot see how you can see aught to

admire in an adventurer. In one who disgraced herself and dishonored her sex by the masculine attire she wore before us all ; who took part in a deception at once vile and absurd ; and was so consummate an actress as to avoid detection, which, looking back, would seem to have been inevitable. I cannot respect such a woman ; is it possible you can love her ? ”

Vainly Richard plead the cause of his Dolores. Mr. Shelbourne's opinions were not easily altered. He thought of the puny Harold, whose want of beauty and of wit were so apparent ; and could not fancy him transformed to a woman worthy of this bright and handsome boy of his.

At last Richard put one question which was answered to his satisfaction.

“ Do you know Dolores, father ? Have you observed her carefully ? Are you not speaking of one you scarcely would recognize were you to meet ? ”

“ In her disguise I could scarcely forget her,” said Mr. Shelbourne. “ As a woman, if she is much altered, I probably should not know her. We have met beside a death-bed and a grave, and I forbade my eyes turning toward her, lest indignation should usurp the place forgiveness should fill alone. Hepsibah Drew and her accomplice did us both great wrong.”

Richard drew a breath of relief.

“ You do not know her,” he said ; “ and when you do you will forgive her. She is an angel ! No selfish motive mingled with her deception ; only her love for her old nurse caused her to remain one hour beneath this roof after your return.”

“ Perhaps she may not have been as guilty as Hepsibah,” said Mr. Shelbourne, “ yet she was culpable and absurdly weak. I can never give my consent to such an alliance.”

And Richard turned away, sad at heart, and left his father's presence. Outside the door he met the doctor and the two Barrington boys. The former, as usual, gave a little sigh and shook his head, but Richard followed him.

“ Uncle,” said he, “ let those boys go somewhere and play ; I want your advice.”

“ I am not your uncle, you know, Dick,” said the doctor ; “ and, as for advice, there's your father, you know.”

“I need you,” said Richard. “Don’t punish me for what I could not help.”

“That’s true,” said the doctor. “You couldn’t help it. It’s that confounded Hepsibah’s fault. Come along, Dick. Boys, wait here, and behave yourselves,” and he took the young man’s arm and walked away.

Richard poured his story into his attentive ear, and by way of comment the doctor muttered :

“Ah ! a real father is no kinder than an adopted uncle after all !”

The thought pleased him, and in a few moments he suggested :

“I tell you what, Dick, this matter is a difficult one ; your father is obstinate and takes airs ; excuse me. A woman only can contrive to manage him ; and as the smartest woman in the world is my landlady, Mrs. Barrington, we’ll appeal to her. Fact, Dick, she is the smartest ! The way she manages all sort of cheating tradesmen is wonderful !”

The result of this resolution can be put in a few words. A week thereafter two ladies came to board with the widow Barrington. One extremely old, who kept her room for the best part of the time. The other, lovely, young and fascinating. By female art and machinations Mr. Shelbourne was inveigled into taking tea at the Barrington cottage, and meeting the young lady admired her intensely, and pitched upon her as the very wife for Richard. This consummation being arrived at, confessions were made, and Mr. Shelbourne learned that the beautiful Miss Wilford was the Cuban Heiress, of whom he entertained so great a horror, and the puny Harold, whose very memory had been a nightmare to him since that individual had vanished from existence.

There was a struggle in his mind between prejudice and conviction, but the end was favorable to the lovers’ hopes, and finally he gave consent and blessing to a union which Dolores had declared should never be consummated against his will.

It was a work of time, and days had rolled into weeks, and weeks to months, before the happy moment arrived, so that a year had passed before Dolores put her hand in that of Richard, and said :

“I can be yours now. Your father has blessed us.”

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A WEDDING, AND OTHER THINGS.

It was a lovely August day. Never had The Pines looked so lovely. The tall trees from which it took its name were green and glossy, and the fragrant perfume from their stately stems diffused itself upon the air. In the garden a thousand blossoms vied with each other in loveliness, and the lawn was one expanse of velvet smoothness, while within every room was newly furnished and adorned.

It had been Mr. Shelbourne's desire that the wedding party should come at once to "The Pines" after the performance of the ceremony, and such a banquet was prepared as had not graced the old dining-room for years. Black Deb was in her agony, and marshaled her assistants with a dignity and empressement only possible to a colored female who occupies the position of cook in a respectable family.

In the distance the church spire glistened in the noon-day sun, and within the church flowers from "The Pines" were arranged in festoons and bouquets. Everything was bright and fresh, and the sexton felt prouder of the arrangements than the famous Brown of Grace Church could feel at the celebration of ten thousand diamond weddings.

The clergyman was ready. The spectators had assembled. Nothing remained but the arrival of the wedding party, and the consummation of the lovers' happiness, when suddenly a small boy rushed into the church and put a note into the sexton's hand.

Curiosity was on tip-toe. What could it be? An elderly lady escaped from the crowd and caught and questioned the lad. She discovered that the note was from Mr. Shelbourne.

Meanwhile the clergyman received and read it. He did not rise and say that there would be no wedding; on the

contrary, he smiled. He looked as though but for his position in society he would have liked to laugh.

The congregation were miserable. What *could* it be?

To gratify our readers, we will inform them that the note intimated to the clergyman that he would be expected to unite two couples instead of one.

Still the spectators waited. The rising breeze fluttered the rose branches at the window; the organist played the "Wedding March;" ribbons stirred, muslins and silks rustled. The clergyman, who was young and sentimental, read his prayer-book and looked in his fresh white surplice as though he were about to be married himself.

Suddenly there was a noise; the church gate opened; every one stared doorward. The clergyman, from his bower of roses, looked congratulatory blessings with his big blue eyes.

A disappointment awaited them. Instead of the bride, in white silk and orange blossoms, entered black Deb, in a very red dress, a very green handkerchief, a white apron, and clumping shoes, followed by her satellites, who were to occupy the squire's pew, and "see Massa Richard married."

Some young people tittered; and a profane youth suggested that this was the bride, and that the Shelbournes had turned Abolitionists, which caused a weak-minded titter along the aisle.

Shortly after, when Deb and her party were comfortably seated, another false alarm was raised. A carriage stopped; somebody sailed in. This time it was Miss Betsy Dash, a wealthy spinster, who always went to weddings, and who entering, so established herself with a view to the exhibition of her new bonnet, that the sexton felt called upon to interfere, and did his task jocularly and politely by saying:

"Really ma'am, excuse me, but if you sit there our pastor will be obliged to marry you to somebody; indeed he will. This place is for the bridal party. Of course somebody would be happy to have you remain, but you have your choice."

At which Miss Dash giggled and retreated.

At last there was really a sound of whirling wheels and

horses' hoofs, and of boys cheering along the road, and the doors opened wide. Enter the party. Firstly, a bridesmaid and groomsman; behind them, Richard and Dolores.

Oh, how beautiful she was! how the girls envied her, and the young men the bridegroom!

Then a little pause, and, behold, another bridesmaid and groomsman! After them, Dr. Rawdon and Mrs. Barrington, the latter pretty and blooming, despite her forty years, in silver-grey silk and white lace; the former beaming with smiles, and actually blushing.

The rest of the party followed in due course.

And then came the ceremony. The sentimental clergyman, with big eyes, doing his part to admiration, and uttering the musical name, Dolores, with its true Spanish accent. And when it came to the doctor's turn, saying, "Wilt thou, Oliver, take this woman," with an air which seemed to say, "Remember, this is the last chance!" and propounding to Mrs. Barrington the query, "Wilt thou, Jane Elizabeth?" As who should say, "Come, now, if you have any objections state them, or keep them to yourself forever!" and requesting any of the congregation who knew any cause why the nuptials should not be solemnized to state their objections, as if he really expected some one to step from the crowd and interfere.

Of course no one did; and the double marriage was consummated without a shadow to mar its bliss, either on the faces within the church or in the sky without.

When it was over, the bridal party proceeded doorward, and on the porch encountered a young gentleman, with a lady on his arm.

The former stepped forward, and grasped Richard's hand.

"Let me be the first to congratulate you," he said. "God bless you, Dick; may you be as happy with your wife as I am with mine. Sophy, this is my dearest friend."

And Richard Shelbourne stood face to face with Alfred Fairfield.

"I have been married a month," he said, as he offered his hand to Dolores. "My wife is an English girl, a stranger here; but I have often spoken of you both, and she feels that she knows you."

Then the lips of the bride of an hour and the wife of a month met sisterlike, and all walked on together to partake of the wedding breakfast at "The Pines."

It was a merry time, and the pioneer of many happy years; and those who dwell at Carltonville can tell you that three happier couples never were united in their old church.

Richard and Dolores dwelt at "The Pines" with Mr. Shelbourne; and the old Cuban lady made her home there until she went to sleep one day to awaken in the next world.

Not far away Alfred Fairfield and his Sophy had their home, and were the fondest of married mortals. While in his cottage *ornee*, Dr. Rawdon dwelt, entertaining the belief that, although Dick's Dolores and Alfred's Sophy were nice girls, his buxom and blooming Jane Elizabeth was as far superior to them as she was to all other women, and that her boys were cherubs in round jackets.

As for Harvey Grier, of course the management of that great Cuban estate devolved on him; and as the old lady's will rendered him independent of his business, he attended to it as a sort of pastime in the legal line.

While Master Tom Burridge came into a comfortable business by right of inheritance, and reigns in the office where he once played lawyer and smoked cigar ends.

Old Deb, the only retainer of "The Pines" who could remember the strange scene enacted beneath its roof, dwelt there until the children of Massa Dick were old enough to toddle, and then expired, bequeathing them her savings, hidden for thirty years in an old flower pot, under the kitchen hearth; and, to our certain knowledge, no mortal has reason to regret the hour which made the Cuban heiress mistress of "The Pines."

[THE END.]

THE SOUVENIR SERIES.


The works comprising this series are selected with great care, the aim being to include only the best and most popular works by writers of known ability. Each book is printed in large type on good paper, and uniformly bound in attractive paper covers.

No.

1. The Three Guardsmen. By Alexander Dumas.
2. The First Violin. By Jessie Fothergill.
3. Mary St. John. By Rosa Nouchette Carey.
4. Under-Currents. By "The Duchess."
5. The Prairie. By J. Fenimore Cooper.
6. Knight-Errant. By Edna Lyall.
7. Babylon. By Grant Allen.
8. The Deemster. By Hall Caine.
9. The Miseries of Paris. By Eugene Sue.
10. A Hardy Norseman. By Edna Lyall.
11. Wee Wifie. By Rosa Nouchette Carey.
12. A Woman's Heart. By Mrs. Alexander.
13. Eve. By S. Baring-Gould.
14. Tempest Driven. By R. Dowling.
15. A Terrible Legacy. By G. W. Appleton.
16. Two Years Before the Mast. By R. H. Dana, Jr.
17. The Silence of Dean Maitland. By Maxwell Gray.
18. Saddle and Sabre. By H. Smart.
19. Second Thoughts. By Rhoda Broughton.
20. St. Katharine's by the Tower. By Walter Besant.
21. One Maid's Mischief. By George Manville Fenn.
22. Molly Bawn. By "The Duchess."
23. Lady Audley's Secret. By Miss M. E. Braddon.
24. Kith and Kin. By J. Fothergill.
25. Edmond Dantes. By Alexander Dumas.
26. Pilgrim's Progress. By Bunyan.
27. The Last of the Mohicans. By J. Fenimore Cooper.
28. The White Company. By A. Conan Doyle.
29. This Wicked World. By Mrs. H. Lovett Cameron.
30. Scheherazade. By Florence Warden.
31. One Life, One Love. By Miss M. E. Braddon.
32. My Danish Sweetheart. By W. Clark Russell.
33. In the Heart of the Storm. By Maxwell Gray.
34. Donald Ross of Heimra. By William Black.
35. Doctor Cupid. Rhoda Broughton.

No.

36. The Count of Monte Cristo. By Alexander Dumas.
37. Cast Up By the Sea. By Sir Samuel W. Baker.
38. A Born Coquette. By "The Duchess."
39. Willy Reilly. By Wm. Carleton.
40. Armored of Lyonesse. By Walter Besant.
41. A Modern Circe. By "The Duchess."
42. The Story of Antony Grace. By George Manville Fenn.
43. The Wonderful Adventures of Phra, the Phoenician. Retold by Edwin Lester Arnold.
44. Oliver Twist. By Dickens.
45. April's Lady. By "The Duchess."
46. The Duke's Secret. By Charlotte M. Braeme.
47. The Reproach of Annesley. By Maxwell Gray.
48. Breezie Langton. By H. Smart.
49. The Hon. Mrs. Vereker. By "The Duchess."
50. Won by Waiting. By Edna Lyall.
51. A Prince of Darkness. By Florence Warden.
52. Mona's Choice. By Mrs. Alexander.
53. Marvel. By "The Duchess."
54. Fair Women. By Mrs. Forrester.
55. A Fiery Ordeal. By C. M. Braeme.
56. A Life's Remorse. By "The Duchess."
57. Allan Quartermain. By H. Rider Haggard.
58. The Witch's Head. By H. Rider Haggard.
59. Weaker Than a Woman. By Charlotte M. Braeme.
60. Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea. By Jules Verne.
61. The Son of Porthos. By Alexander Dumas.
62. A Dateless Bargain. By C. L. Pirkis.
63. Grimm's Fairy Tales.
64. A Woman's War. By Charlotte M. Braeme.
65. Anna Karénine. By Tolstoi.
66. His Helpmate. By F. Barrett.
67. Vivian, the Beauty. By Mrs. Annie Edwards.
68. Dora Thorne. By C. M. Braeme.
69. Tom Brown's Schooldays. By Thomas Hughes.
70. Michael Strogoff. By Jules Verne.
71. The Old House at Sandwich. By Joseph Hatton.


 Any of the above books will be sent by mail, postpaid, upon receipt of price, TWENTY-FIVE CENTS each. Address

THE F. M. LUPTON PUBLISHING COMPANY,
No. 65 Duane Street, New York.

THE IDLE HOUR SERIES.

The works in this series are exclusively *American Copyright Novels*, by the most popular authors of the day, which can be obtained in no other edition. They comprise a series of novels of strong dramatic interest, and being printed from large type on good paper, uniformly bound in attractive paper covers, and sold at a popular price, they should command the attention of every lover of good fiction.

NO.	NO.
1. Tirzah Ann's Summer Trip, and Other Sketches. By Josiah Allen's Wife.	11. Ralph Raymond's Heir. By Horatio Alger, Jr.
2. Guilty or Not Guilty. By Amanda M. Douglas.	12. The Fatal Glove. By Clara Augusta.
3. Sir Noel's Heir. By Mrs. May Agnes Fleming.	13. The Heir of Glenville. By Francis A. Durivage.
4. The Twelve Great Diamonds. By Mrs. Jane G. Austin.	14. A Brave Little Woman. By Mrs. Mary A. Denison.
5. The Heiress of Hendee Hall. By Etta W. Pierce.	15. Blackbird Hill. By Esther Serle Kenneth.
6. The Cuban Heiress. By Mary Kyle Dallas.	16. Thornycroft Grange. By Rett Winwood.
7. The Lady Mary. By Mrs. Ann S. Stephens.	17. The Queen's Revenge. By Sylvanus Cobb, Jr.
8. Isora's Bridal Vow. By Margaret Blount.	18. The Mill-Girl of Tyrol. By M. T. Caldor.
9. Ivan the Serf. By Sylvanus Cobb, Jr.	19. David Hunt. By Mrs. Ann S. Stephens.
10. The Wizard of Granada. By M. T. Caldor.	20. It Never Did Run Smooth. By Mrs. Jane G. Austin.

 Any of the above books will be sent by mail, postpaid, upon receipt of price, TEN CENTS each. Address

THE F. M. LUPTON PUBLISHING COMPANY.


No. 65 Duane Street,

New York.

THE ELITE SERIES.

Comprising the best standard works of fiction. Each work in this series is printed from large type on good paper, and uniformly bound in attractive paper covers.

NO.		NO.	
1.	Lorna Doone. By R. D. Blackmore.	20.	The Nun's Curse. By Mrs. J. H. Riddell.
2.	East Lynne. By Mrs. Henry Wood.	21.	Not Like Other Girls. By Rosa Nouchette Carey.
3.	The Woman in White. By Wilkie Collins.	22.	Jane Eyre. By Charlotte Bronte.
4.	Romola. By George Eliot.	23.	Heriot's Choice. By Rosa Nouchette Carey.
5.	The Man in the Iron Mask. By Alexander Dumas.	24.	Dick's Wandering. By Julian Sturgis.
6.	A False Start. By Hawley Smart.	25.	John Halifax, Gentleman. By Miss Mulock.
7.	Donovan. By Edna Lyall.	26.	Double Cunning. By George Manville Fenn.
8.	Dawn. By H. Rider Haggard.	27.	Rory O'More. By Samuel Lover.
9.	Louise de la Vallerie. By Alexander Dumas.	28.	The Frozen Pirate. By W. Clark Russell.
10.	Under Two Flags. By Ouida.	29.	The Mysteries of Paris. By Eugene Sue.
11.	Wood and Married. By Rosa Nouchette Carey.	30.	Only the Governess. By Rosa Nouchette Carey.
12.	The Master of the Ceremonies. By George Manville Fenn.	31.	Twenty Years After. By Alexander Dumas.
13.	The Struggle for Life. By Albert Delpit.	32.	The Pioneers. By J. Fenimore Cooper.
14.	The Last Days of Pompeii. By Sir E. Bulwer-Lytton.	33.	Handy Andy. By Samuel Lover.
15.	Lover or Friend? By Rosa Nouchette Carey.	34.	A Woman's Face. By Florence Warden.
16.	The Deerslayer. By J. Fenimore Cooper.	35.	In the Golden Days. By Edna Lyall.
17.	The Vicomte de Bragelonne. By Alexander Dumas.	36.	The Pathfinder. By J. Fenimore Cooper.
18.	Uncle Max. By Rosa Nouchette Carey.	37.	Deldee, the Ward of War ringham. By Florence Warden.
19.	We Two. By Edna Lyall.	38.	Robinson Crusoe. By Daniel Defoe.


 Any of the above books will be sent by mail, post paid, upon receipt of price, TWENTY-FIVE CENTS each. Address

THE F. M. LUPTON PUBLISHING COMPANY,
No. 65 Duane Street, New York.

THE BIJOU SERIES.

Comprising the most popular works of the most celebrated authors. Each work in this series is printed from large type on good paper, and uniformly bound in attractive paper covers.

- | | |
|--|---|
| No. | No. |
| 1. The Old Mam'selle's Secret. By E. Marlitt. | 29. A Rogue's Life. By Wilkie Collins. |
| 2. Blind Fate. By Mrs. Alexander. | 30. The Other Man's Wife. By John Strange Winter. |
| 3. A Vagrant Wife. By Florence Warden. | 31. The Master of the Mine. By Robert Buchanan. |
| 4. Peg Woffington. By Charles Reade. | 32. Dear Life. By J. E. Panton. |
| 5. Ruffino. By Ouida. | 33. Lord Lisle's Daughter. By Charlotte M. Braeme. |
| 6. Love's Atonement. By Th. Bentzon. | 34. The Dark House. By George Manville Fenn. |
| 7. A Little Rebel. By "The Duchess." | 35. Essays. Second Series. By Ralph Waldo Emerson. |
| 8. Merle's Crusade. By Rosa Nouchette Carey. | 36. Doris's Fortune. By Florence Warden. |
| 9. I Have Lived and Loved. By Mrs. Forrester. | 37. The Bag of Diamonds. By George Manville Fenn. |
| 10. Jet: Her Face or Her Fortune. By Mrs. Annie Edwards. | 38. Addie's Husband. By the author of "Jessie." |
| 11. The House on the Marsh. By Florence Warden. | 39. The Tour of the World in Eighty Days. By Jules Verne. |
| 12. For Maimie's Sake. By Grant Allen. | 40. Struck Down. By Hawley Smart. |
| 13. The Essays of Elia. By Charles Lamb. | 41. The Rabbi's Spell. By Stuart C. Cumberland. |
| 14. Christie Johnstone. By Charles Reade. | 42. A Nemesis. By J. Maclaren Colban. |
| 15. Ladies' Fancy Work. | 43. The Mystery of Mrs. Blencarrow. By Mrs. Oliphant. |
| 16. Wife in Name Only. By Charlotte M. Braeme. | 44. Master Rockafellar's Voyage. By W. Clark Russell. |
| 17. Through Green Glasses. By F. M. Allen. | 45. The Great Hesper. By Frank Barrett. |
| 18. The Story of an African Farm. By Ralph Iron. | 46. The Frontiersmen. By Gustave Ajmard. |
| 19. She: A History of Adventure. By H. Rider Haggard. | 47. At the World's Mercy. By Florence Warden. |
| 20. Mr. Fortescue. By William Westall. | 48. The Yellow Mask. By Wilkie Collins. |
| 21. King Solomon's Mines. By H. Rider Haggard. | 49. Three Men in a Boat. By Jerome K. Jerome. |
| 22. Essays. First Series. By Ralph Waldo Emerson. | 50. Matt: A Tale of a Caravan. By Robert Buchanan. |
| 23. Camille. By Alexandre Dumas, Fils. | 51. Lily Lass. By Justin McCarthy, M.P. |
| 24. Beyond the End. By Clarence M. Boutelle. | 52. A Little Irish Girl. By "The Duchess." |
| 25. The Modern Home Cook Book. | 53. Forging the Fetters. By Mrs. Alexander. |
| 26. The Last Essays of Elia. By Charles Lamb. | 54. What Gold Cannot Buy. By Mrs. Alexander. |
| 27. The Shadow of a Sin. By Charlotte M. Braeme. | 55. A Marriage at Sea. By W. Clark Russell. |
| 28. The Secret of Her Life. By Edward Jenkins. | |

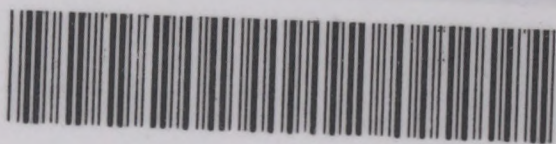
 Any of the above books will be sent by mail, postpaid, upon receipt of price, TWENTY-FIVE CENTS each. Address

THE F. M. LUPTON PUBLISHING COMPANY,

No. 65 Duane Street,

New York.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00021993244